SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 530. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 25TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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6ft. by 12ft.	11 s. 6d.		12ft. by 13½ft.	22s. 0d.
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SHORT STORIES

No. 530. For the Week ending February 25th, 1899. One Penny.

The Death Model.

He was the handsomest man among the men who thronged the Artists' Quarter. But who he was, or where he came from, no one knew.

He painted exquisite pictures, which sold without the least difficulty.

We soon grew to like the fair-haired giant. He was so kindly courteous, so truly a gentleman. He seldom smiled, and his eyes, of deepest violet, always had a woeful expression in their depths.

That there was something strange about him, we realised from the first. At times he was the life of the party, and anon plunged into a gloom from which nothing could arouse him. At such times he would lock himself in his studio, and no word or entreaty from any of us could call him forth till the fit passed.

After these long seclusions he would come among us pale and enfeebled, and with an indefinable something about him which impressed us all, but to which none gave expression save the irrepressible Martin.

"Ugh!" he said one day with a shiver, "you look as if you had been communing with the dead."

The handsome face of Valette underwent a strange change as he replied, in his low, sweet voice:

"Would communing with the dead leave its imprint upon a man's face?"

"Unquestionably!"

Valette sighed deeply and turned away.

In the course of the next six months there were to be three distinct art exhibitions, and nearly every occupant of the Quarter was engaged upon a picture which he fondly hoped would secure the prize, or at least be hung. Such a rushing about for models, such grumbling and fault-finding you never heard of.

Valette, however, maintained his usual quietness, and when questioned as to his success in model hunting, assured us he had secured one in every way satisfactory. Yet my studio was right opposite his, and, watch as closely as I might, I never caught a glimpse of any model coming or going.

My own picture was a scene where a young and lovely wife was pleading for the life of her husband, who had been sentenced to death. Everything was completed save the face of the pleader, and I was unable to find any model capable of assuming the expression I was desirous of securing.

One day while lounging in Valette's room I incidentally mentioned my difficulty. Lifting the lid of a great desk he handed me a square of canvas.

"Will that be of any use?" was all he said.

I uttered an involuntary cry of delight.

The picture was painted with masterly skill, and represented a woman kneeling, with clasped hands and upturned face, at the foot of a wreathed-crowned cross.

But the woman's face made one give small heed to the details of the picture. Such agonised entreaty, such almost hopeless despair in the dark eyes; my own involuntarily filled with tears as I gazed.

I saw Valette was regarding me closely, as I raised my eyes from the picture and caught the same look of hopeless sadness in his own beautiful eyes ere he turned them away.

"You are welcome to make use of the face," and he began painting as if nothing had happened.

After that we grew to be close friends. Time sped on. One after another the men of our set finished their pictures and sent them in to the committees. Some were raised to the seventh heaven by a speedy acceptance, while others were plunged into deepest despair by a rejection.

I was one of the fortunate, and Valette informed me that all three of his were hung. He had not allowed even me to see them, and I was curiously anxious for the time to come when I could do so.

I was early upon opening day, but as I examined picture after picture, I found nothing to especially interest me until I heard little Martin's voice exclaim:

"Heavens! what a subject!"

I quickly made my way to his side, and as I saw what he was gazing upon, I mentally echoed his words.

It was a large picture of superb and gorgeous colouring. The background was a luxuriant growth of tropical verdure. To the right the shining waves rolled in upon the beach of shimmering white sand. But the figure occupying the foreground subordinated all these.

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It was the form of a superbly beautiful woman struggling in the folds of an immense serpent.

One instantly comprehended the futility of the effort she was making, but every sinew in one's body tightened in sympathy. Both white hands clutched at the monster's throat, and the loathing horror upon her face told how fully she realised what must be her doom. Two folds of the gleaming body encircled her waist and limbs, and the terrible head, with distended jaws and diamond bright eyes, gradually nearing her face.

"Ugh! Whatever possesses Valette to paint such a picture? It is so horribly realistic," grumbled Martin. "See, Webster, the woman's face and form have already the hue of the dead."

It was so, and I shivered as I had done on gazing upon a corpse a few days before.

I did not ask my friend how he knew this was Valette's picture, for there was no mark on it. As I gazed, the conviction grew upon me that it was, and as I at length tore myself away I re-echoed Martin's words; "Whatever possessed Valette to paint such horrible things?"

I returned every day to gaze upon it, and it indeed seemed as if decay had fastened upon the rounded limbs and beautiful face, so perfectly was the hue of death depicted.

I said nothing to Valette upon the subject, however, but waited with impatience for the opening of the next month's exhibit.

This time it did not need Martin to point out Valette's work, though as before there was no mark by which to identify it.

A wide stretch of angry, tossing sea, extending on all sides to a dull sodden sky, no living object visible, but in the foreground the floating form of a woman, her dead face with half-closed eyes, gleaming ghastly white through the semi-gloom. Her delicate, rounded limbs were half visible through the enshrouding waters, and they wore the same terrible hue of death we had shuddered over in the former picture.

The colouring of every feature of the scene was so natural, the outlines so perfect, that one could almost hear the swish of the waves, and catch the undulating motion of the dead.

I went away more dissatisfied than ever. Who was Valette's model? And how had he caught the hue of death which others found so impossible to master?

At last the grand exhibition opened, and I only paused to give a self-congratulatory nod as I saw what an advantageous light had been given my own picture, in hurrying on to find Valette's masterpiece.

Worse and worse! Ugh! I shudder at the remembrance even at this late date, but among all that immense collection of pictures, there was none before which the crowd so persistently lingered.

It was a second sea scene. Under a glaring tropical sky, where the sun gleamed like a ball of fire, floated a raft, upon a sea whose waves were copper-hued and scorching. Upon the raft were three human forms. One, a woman so grandly proportioned, so wondrously beautiful, that you instinctively envied death her possession.

She clasped a babe lovingly to her bared breast, as is the mother love had sought even in death to prolong the feeble life. The other form was that of a man, as superbly formed and proportioned as that of the woman. Death had claimed them all, as was proved by their glassy eyes and upturned faces, helpless under the burning sun. Here again was the greyish pallor, horribly suggestive of decay.

As I gazed fascinated by the very horror of the scene, a messenger put a note in my hand. It was from Valette, urging me to come to him at once, as he was ill. I instantly left the building, nor paused until I stood by his bedside.

A Sister of Charity and an old greybeard of a doctor were in attendance. It was Roman fever, and would probably prove fatal, was the verdict.

Valette bore the sentence bravely, and then requested to be left alone with me.

"I shall be delirious in a moment," he said, grasping my hand eagerly, "so must talk fast.

"Behind yon curtain you will find a large box of which this is the key," pushing one into my hand; "take one look at its contents, and then see it laid in consecrated ground. When I am dead lay me beside it. Keep my secret—promise—promise!"

The last words came gaspingly, and ere I could reply he sank into unconsciousness.

I hastily recalled the attendants, then, with a pitying glance at the doomed man, lifted the curtain behind which I had never seen, notwithstanding my intimacy with Valette.

There was nothing remarkable in the sight, save the box of which he had spoken. It was large, and stood upright against the wall, where the afternoon light streamed full upon it.

Inserting the key in the lock, I quickly swung open the door. A cry of horror and fear escaped me as its contents were thus revealed.

Its sides were padded, and lined with white satin and costly lace. In the centre, in a kneeling posture, was the half clothed form of a dead woman. The original of all his horrible pictures, I saw at once; for here was the superb limbs and wondrous beauty. Here was the model, about whom we had made so many conjectures.

The embalmer's work had been skilfully done, but an unmistakeable charnel house odour came to my nostrils, and I hastened to close and lock the door, destined never to be re-opened.

I lost no time in seeing the fearful thing underground, although it was not accomplished without some risk and a generous use of gold.

I then devoted myself to Valette's care, and had the satisfaction of seeing him recover. Slowly, it is true, and with many relapses, but one day, six months later, we left Rome together on a long journey round the world, during which he recovered health and spirits. The love he gave me fully repaid me for all the sacrifices I had made in order to be with him.

It was many months ere the subject of his model was mentioned between us, but one day, in the wilds of a Brazilian forest, he told me a strange story of wrong-doing and sorrow.

He had loved the beautiful woman whose form I had laid away, but she became the wife of another.

In life he could not possess her, but when death laid his icy hand on her, he had stolen her body away, and lived in its presence for months, half mad, and wholly heart-broken.

He shuddered at the remembrance of those fearful months, wondering now, in his sanity, how he could ever have been possessed of such morbid madness, and he has never since looked upon those terrible pictures.

Cyril Newland.

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A Man of the Past.

There is no doubt that Miles Otway was contradictory by nature. His best friends said he was unmanageable unless you began at the wrong end with him. Then perhaps, he would argue you—and himself—round to the right. Right was his purpose, but he must fight his way to it; he must first discover and demolish the wrong.

At parish meetings, and in all affairs of general interest, he was sure to be in the opposition, so they called him, "Old Per Contra."

He had been engaged during his youth to a girl, who had said to him more than once, "Miles you are the most opposite-sided person I ever met." A time came at last, when, in answer to some utter unreasonableness, it had been, "I don't think, Miles, we had better risk it, after all."

Then he remonstrated with all the joined power of his habitual combativeness and his truest feeling; but to no purpose. Marion West had come, reluctantly, to mean it. The engagement came to an end. Miles was then twenty-seven; Marion nineteen. Four years later she married Doctor Fletcher, and went with him to his home. Miles never married. In Marion's rare visits home he was careful not to meet her.

Thrown back on himself, Miles grew bitter against the world. He denounced much, tolerated little, excused nothing. Just to a fault, by that fault he failed of justice, even to himself.

One person only came near him; that one hardly knew how near. Their life so managed itself that neither of them guessed or betrayed the undemonstrated depth of mutual regard. And yet it was plain to any third person that old Miles and young Sam had no life apart from each other. Nobody dare hint of "Old Per Contra" in Sam Otway's hearing; nobody dare speak slight of Sam to his Uncle Miles.

Since the young man was sixteen they had lived together in the old Otway's house on the side of Thornton East Hill. All else of the immediate family, in both generations, had passed onward, leaving place and memory to these nearest kin. Miles Otway held in possession the greater part of the ancestral inheritance, which was large. Sam had what remained of his father's share after considerable spending and losing, and this residue was not large. Everybody thought, of course, that he would ultimately have the whole. This, which would seem a strong bond of interest, was really between the two a separating wedge.

The old man was out of touch with the present.

"Whatever you do, Sam, don't marry a girl of the period," he said one day.

"A girl of which period shall I marry?" Sam asked. "I seem to have been born into this one myself."

"Do the best you can in it, then. There may be an exception to be found."

"Not in a little old-fashioned bonnet, and innocent of Browning, or Paderewski, or the higher mathematics, or associated charities, Uncle Miles. That girl is gone. May not these that have come be just as nice and sweet, in spite of their dress and doing? They only take things where they find them, as the others did before."

"Can't be as nice," grumbled his uncle. "It's all demoralising. The fittest hasn't survived. Folly has run to seed; there was always plenty of it; now the crop's pretty much weeds."

"You hold aloof, Uncle; you don't know."

"Don't mean to know. I don't belong to the end of the century."

The man who had lost his past and rejected his present, threw down the newspaper with which he daily aggravated himself, got up and walked away.

The unforeseen occurred. Marion Fletcher returned to Thornton a widow. Her father and mother had died; the house in Thornton belonged to her. Her income was modest; it would do more, and in better accordance with her wishes, here.

With her came her daughter Rose, and a little grandson just out of babyhood, the child of a daughter who had died.

In a straight line, had the hill been tunnelled, her house and Miles' would have been scarcely a furlong apart; but there are few straight lines in the world—it was up hill and down hill between them. Miles, in his daily constitutionals, never walked that road now. The younger man soon found the way.

Rose Fletcher was eighteen and pretty; Sam was in the flush of twenty-five, and soon very much in love. He knew nothing about the old story, a part of which was repeating itself.

Mrs. Fletcher's deep, shaded verandah, the one grand adjunct of her unpretentious house, was delightful on a summer evening. It came to pass that many a time when Uncle Miles, smoking his solitary pipe, paced up and down his long garden walk, Sam was behind the honeysuckle trellis of the Fletcher's house, enjoying the companionship, and falling under the special charm which had never come to him before.

Mrs. Fletcher began to see what was impending with a dread, and yet a secret hope. It might bring trouble; it might result in beautiful replacement. A new, young love might redeem the bitterness in which the old had ended, and draw near in a late peace of friendship the lives so long estranged.

Marion Fletcher had loved her husband; and she cherished his memory.

In the years since Gilbert Fletcher died, it had never entered her thoughts that any change could be imagined for her from her single absolute loyalty. It did not invade her conciousness now. She was free of herself; she could frankly wish to be forgiven and better understood by Miles Otway; to change his scorn into kindly confidence; to draw forth his true nature once more; to compensate his pain with calm content.

It was different with Miles. Though he would have disdained the self-suspicion, he was half afraid of any reconciliation because of what that reconciliation now could never be. He was loyal to his first love in what he thought his hate. But hate is never dead indifference. It is the other side of love, and love is life.

So far he had kept successfully from Marion's path. He had not even passed her so nearly on the street as to have met her glance. He would by no means have held out his hand to her; he thought his contempt would have hindered him.

One evening Sam took Mrs. Fletcher—perhaps himself—by surprise.

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She had walked with him down the winding path, narrowed and dark with shrubbery, to the gate in her white front fence.

He took her hand to say good-night; suddenly he could not let it go.

"I must say it!" he broke forth. "You know already don't you?"

Yet as if she did not know, he told her; the old story, with the old demand, that mothers have to listen to and answer with struggle of love and joy and pain, or other passions, according to their differing natures. Her Rose was the rose of the world to him; might he tell her so?

Dismay was Marion's first feeling. She drew back her hand. It had come too soon. "Oh wait!" she entreated. "There hasn't been time!"

"My dear Mrs. Fletcher, for what? Does time count? All there ever was, or will be is present tense. The thing is——"

"Oh, I know. That is the trouble. With everything else time doesn't count. It will count with your uncle. It isn't present tense with him."

"No. He has to be persuaded down from his past," said Sam, not guessing how truly he spoke. "But if you and Rose——"

"Not yet," she interrupted. "There ought to be some opportunity for him to know Rose—to understand me—a little—better. If he would only come here, as you have come—a neighbour—and see for himself and believe! Mr. Otway," she went on after a pause, "I used to know him long ago, but I do not know him now. He is, they say, a peculiar, prejudiced man. It will all be strange to him. He will not like it. He will think, perhaps, that I have—managed."

Sam hardly understood her anxious incoherency. "My uncle does not visit," he said. "The only way is to tell him what has happened—if it may happen. He is peculiar, but he is a just man. I must be fair with him."

Yet with the words his mind misgave him. What would his uncle say? Would he give himself a chance, or would he commit himself by instant, stern refusal?

"Promise me to wait a little while," said Mrs. Fletcher.

"I will not press nor hurry you," the young man said, his tone unconsciously a shade uneasy. "But do not let it be too long. I do not like to keep things back. I would rather be quite open with my uncle from the beginning. Indeed, it is the wiser way."

Marion held out her hand again to say good-night, Sam pressed it warmly.

"I owe it to my Uncle Miles, you see," he said with gentle apology. "Yet, all the same, my own mind is made up, as a man's should be." With that he left her.

In her room afterward Mrs. Fletcher said to herself:

"I will see Miles Otway. I will make friends with him. Or else—for Rose's sake—I will leave it all to Sam. He is right. A man's mind should be made up."

A pleasant lane, with small houses on each side, ran up at the back of the high street from the village square, where were the shops and post-office. Miles often took this quiet, roundabout way in going home.

One morning he walked along it leisurely, pausing presently before a cottage. Two women lived there, mother and daughter, seamstresses. They sometimes did work for Mr. Otway. He now and then sent them fruits, vegetables, and flowers, from his own garden. He stood there, his cane tucked under one arm, while he cut some bits of the young-leaved, thorny twigs of the sweet brier.

The door opened; a lady came out. She wore a simple black dress, a bonnet of folded black silk, within whose edge a single, soft white line defined a fair, sweet face. No cataract of crêpe; no evasive ornament. A quiet acceptance of a fixed estate. Miles did not look up. He was busy with his cuttings. He stepped aside that she might pass, but she did not.

"Mr. Otway." The voice was calmly gentle.

Then he had to make some sign, for he was a gentleman. The hand that still held the knife went up to his hat and raised it slightly. If he ha known which way she meant to go he would have gone the other; but she did not move, and he stood still, trimming his sprigs.

"Why cannot we be friends?" the sweet voice said.

She half held out her hand, but he was busy, and he would not see.

"We are growing old, Miles."

"I am old. I do not make new friends."

"Nor forgive old ones?"

Miles looked straight at her then, as cold as stone.

"I don't know whether outgrowing is forgiving. I've outgrown a good deal in my life," he said.

Even yet she would not be repulsed; there was nothing in her meaning that could be ashamed.

"We are neighbours now," she said with kindly dignity. "I should like it to be in neighbourly content."

He had finished his work deliberately, and put his knife in his pocket. He took his stick from under his arm.

"I am content. But I don't make neighbours, either. It's too late for beginnings. I've lived my life."

He stepped off the path and lifted his hand to his hat.

"Not all of it," answered Marion, as she moved to go. "There is the Land of the Leal."

The Leal! Miles' lips flashed into a bitter curve.

"An uncertain place and population," he remarked frigidly. "I don't see how it can be largely re-enforced from this planet."

The man had the last word. Men occasionally do. He finished his intended salutation with a remote, stately courtesy, and passed on.

Mrs. Fletcher raised her interdict. Nothing else remained for her to do. Sam thereupon joined his uncle in the garden path one evening and made avowal.

"Uncle Miles," he said briefly, "I have found my girl of the period. Your exception, too, I think. The period has neither made nor spoilt her. She would have been the same at any period."

"You put a good many periods in your remarks without coming to the point. Please state your fact."

"I thought I was stating it. Not much remains. The girl I mean—the girl I hope to marry—is Rose Fletcher."

"That woman's daughter. That accounts."

"Her mother's daughter; yes, it does account," said Sam quickly, perceiving and resenting a prejudice, without at all comprehending it.

"For every perfection? Very likely you think so. I'm not surprised. She's that sort of woman. One way or another she'll flirt and cajole till she dies. She would

make eyes—for an object—at an organ-grinder's monkey."

He said it, calmly scornful, between slow whiffs of his pipe. The cumulative bitterness of his words drew itself from a new, severe wound—the sudden suspicious understanding of her beautiful overture of peace.

The absurdity was beyond resenting; Sam nearly laughed. But he answered curtly, "She would be sweet to anybody or anything, if that's what you mean."

"Yes, that's what I mean. And she would mean nothing but her own ends."

"Uncle, you are unjust; unworthy of yourself. You do not know Mrs. Fletcher."

"I knew her before you were born."

A faint apprehension flashed through Sam's mind.

"I cannot help it. You may have been mistaken then; you certainly are mistaken now. I hope you will think better of it," he was adding with entreaty, "for——"

"I don't think of it at all," interrupted the old man.

"But I ask you to think of it! Don't be hard, Uncle; this means everything in my life. There is absolutely no other way for me."

"Then our ways separate. I cannot help it either."

The two walked on without words. It was hard to break from each other so, hard to separate their ways.

"Understand," said Miles Otway, stopping when they reached the house again, and shaking the dead ashes from his pipe, "I have no spite in this matter. It will make no difference in what I shall ultimately do for you, though it may in a way of my doing it. Family property is a trust. You're safe in that respect. I've no threats to make. You can go your own way. But you cannot bring that young woman here; and"—slowly—"I will never enter your door. We will not speak of it any further."

It was the cruelest dismissal that could have been given. It was a torture that only one generous spirit, under warp and wound, could inflict upon another.

The marriage took place in February. On the night before his wedding the young man found upon his dressing-table an envelope; it held a cheque for two hundred and fifty pounds. In the morning he met his uncle as he came downstairs. Before the old man knew, Sam had his hand; the grasp was strong. "I know you don't want words," he said. "But I feel as you would in my place." Then they went in to breakfast together.

Sam bought "The Hollyhocks," an old house and small, long ago a beautiful mansion, but vandalised, in vulgar hands, by the improvements of forty years before, and now neither ancient nor modern. But there he and his wife were very happy.

* * * * *

When February came round again a beautiful happening at "The Hollyhocks" made the home complete. Miles Otway found a note on his breakfast-table.

"I have a little son," it said. "I shall give him the old family name. I hope you won't take it amiss."

The old man was crotchety that day. The new pull chafed hard the soreness of his harsh resolve.

The time went by. These last months had been the bitterest of all to Miles since the "separate ways" began. There was something in the world he had a right to, but that by his own action he could not take. Against this condition of things he rebelled. It was not comfortable.

One day he got a bit the best of it for the time being. "I owe the youngster that much anyhow," he said. Being a just man he went upstairs, took something out of an old chest and sent it to London. It came back in a neat silversmith's box. It lay a week in his drawer. He could not quite decide how to act.

Sam came in several times. He had never stayed away. It would have been easy enough to hand the parcel to him, but Uncle Miles said to himself with a vague obstinacy, "No hurry, I'll do it as I please."

Easter Monday arrived, and he had not found out what he pleased. Early after tea he took his stick, and walked over the hill. There was a bright young moon. The weather was clear and still.

Miles purpose was not even yet defined when he was in sight of the house. He might ring, do his errand, and go as he had come. Suppose Sam should open the door? What matter? He need not cross the threshold. He need not break that—confounded—word of his. Secretly, the wish was in him that something might happen to give a turn to things.

The door was open. Half unconsciously he stepped into the hall.

The handle of a door into an adjoining room turned softly. A small figure came out and stopped; a child's face stared up at him. Two little hands put themselves sturdily behind the back, however, and the look did not flinch.

"Does you want my mamma?" the boy asked.

For a moment the man was as much surprised as his small detective. Then it came to him.

"Oh, you're the other one," he said.

"No, I ain't ze uzzer one. Ze uzzer one's upstairs in a basket. He's ze new boy. I's ze one zat always was. He can't sit up to dinner. I's four years old."

"Oh!"

"Oo is you?"

"*Miles Otway*," was the grim, grave answer.

"Well," said the boy, "I ain't af'aid. An' I sink I's better go and tell ze ozzers."

"Show me the way. I'll go, too."

The boy turned, opened the door behind him and ran on shouting:

"I's got him! Here's sombody! I's caught him, my ownself!"

Miles Otway followed, composed and dignified.

* * * * *

Half an hour later dinner was served, Miles was at Rose's right hand, between her and Sam. Opposite were Marion and the boy.

Everybody had taken everything as of natural course. There had been no question or explanation. Uncle Miles had effected the grand gainsaying, he had contradicted himself.

In the middle of the table, close under the épergne of ferns, stood a beautiful old-fashioned cup. On it were three inscriptions:

Miles Otway, Jan. 4, 1798.
Miles Otway, Aug. 6, 1830.
Miles Otway, Feb. 2, 1892.

This last little Miles was brought down at dessert to be shown his inheritance.

Before little Gay was taken to bed he came and climbed upon the rung of Uncle Miles' chair.

"I know which you is now," he whispered in his ear, "You's the fairy godmovver!"

William Grace.

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AN UNWILLING PASSENGER.

A COLD east wind was sweeping over the unsheltered country where lay the little station of Lidby Junction—so cold that no one who could stay at home would have chosen to face it. Nevertheless three or four passengers had just alighted from the local train and were preparing to wait till the next "up" train was due. Whether they were willing travellers that bleak night may be left to conjecture.

All but one immediately sought the shelter and warmth of the waiting-room. The one—a gentleman—remained on the platform.

"How long to wait, porter?" he asked.

"Forty-five minutes, sir," was the answer.

The passenger pulled up the collar of his fur coat and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Not there!" he called out, as the porter, carrying his valise, made for the waiting-room. "Three women and a man there already and no chance of seeing the fire."

"You can't wait out here, sir," said the man, surprised.

"Don't intend to. I'll go and have a smoke at your fire, and you can help me to pass away the time. What's a porter for if not to make passengers comfortable? Now don't keep us standing here!"

The porter led the way without another word to the little den at the end of the platform of which he appeared to have the sole monopoly. It was neither clean nor inviting, but the fur-coated passenger pulled a chair up to the hearth, gave the fire a poke and quietly produced a silver cigarette case.

"Sit down," said he to the porter. "It's not your fault that there's no system in the working of country railways, and that passengers are shot out like bales of goods to wait for the next conveyance. If it was I should have enough to say to you for the next three-quarters of an hour. But it will be your fault if you don't fill your pipe out of that pouch."

"Thank 'e, sir," said the porter. "I'll not be in fault this time."

"I can't ask you to have a drink," said the other, as he applied the match to the end of his cigarette, "or I would. I want some one to pitch into about that too. But there are too many grievances to get over without plenty of time. The only solution I can see is not to travel at all. I daresay now, you've never been a twenty mile journey in your life?"

The porter was pressing the tobacco into the bowl of his pipe with a satisfied expression, and at the same time wondering what sort of a gent this was who carried things with so high a hand.

"Well, sir," he answered, "I can't exactly say that, for it's a deal more than twenty miles to the place where I was porter first. That was on the South-Western line. It was only last year I got sent on here."

"And how did you come to be carted off to this dead-alive hole?"

"I was laid up in hospital down at Exeter for six weeks, and my place was filled up. And talking of journeys, sir, it was all along of a journey that *that* happened."

"Yes?"

"Yes, sir, that it was. And it was the rummiest journey that as ever a man took."

The traveller glanced at the burly young man. "Well, how was that?" he asked.

"Well, sir," said the porter, not at all unwilling to tell his story, "it is just a year since then—much the same sort of a night as this, with not a star showin'. It was a little station like this, not many passengers as a rule, but a good many trains passin' through in the day. The lamps were all alight and the line signalled clear for the 'up' train. It was bitter cold, and I says to my mate, 'Not many for Exeter to-night,' for there were but two or three when the train came in. It stopped only a minute or two. Just as I was shutting the last door, I sees a man make a rush for it. He seemed to come out of the dark and not through the station door at all. He made for the carriage and got in, and before I knew any more I was gripped under the arms, pulled in too, and thrown down on the floor. The surprise sort o' stunned me for a minute, but when I looked up the train was moving and a tall man in grey was standing over me.

"'What's up?' says I, not knowing.

"He put his great foot on my chest. My eye! he *was* a big man—with eyes that seemed to screw you up like a gimlet.

"'Now look here,' says he, speaking quiet. 'If you do what I tell you no harm shall happen to you. If not, by——I'll kill you!' And I knew he meant it. 'I could choke you now,' says he; 'but if you will get up and change clothes with me you shall go scot free.'

"'Mad,' thinks I, 'no good refusing.' So I says 'yes,' and he lets me get up. I did it quick for I won't say as I wasn't in a bit of a fright. But you might have knocked me down with a feather, sir, when I saw his clothes—for they were a *convict's*, light drab colour with the broad arrow marked clear. No help for it. He got mine and had them on as quick as lightning.

"'Now,' says he, 'no noise,' and he gave me a blow that took the wind out of me and gagged me with my own pocket-handkerchief.

"Before I had got the better of that knock he had tied my hands together with the strap he wrenched off the window and I lay helpless. I was no match for such mighty strength.

"'Now,' says he, 'so long as you lie quiet under the seat you are safe,' and with that he gave me a push, and then I lay like a log.

"The train stopped just after that. I couldn't move, and no one came in, and the convict's great boots were so close to my head that I didn't like the idea of a knock with them. So I lay quiet. Then we stopped at Okehampton. Someone got in. I couldn't see, but I knew presently it was a woman. She sat on the seat I was lying under. 'A cold night ma'am,' says the convict, but his voice was so altered that I shouldn't have known it.

"'Yes it is cold,' says the other, and I knew she was a

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lady. Then he began to talk for all the world just as though he was really a porter. Very soon he had made her believe that he belonged to Exeter station and promised to find her a cab when the train arrived there. I lay wonder ng how all this was going to end. At Crediton the carriage door opened again, and this time a man came in. My heart began to beat at the thought of help. If only I could get my hands undone I thought I could finish this little play. But I was tied fast—with the convict's boots close to my head, and I began to think of the figure I'd cut in that convict rig-out even if I did appear.

"Presently the villain began to talk to the man who had just come in. He was a farmer—a slow-speaking chap—elderly, I soon found out, and a bit asthmatical.

"'Bad weather for you,' says the convict.

"'Middlin' bad,' answers the other.

"'Got far to go, sir?' asks my man.

"'Exeter,' answers the farmer. 'My son there's took mortal bad.' And then he began wheezing and coughing, and I saw I shouldn't get much help from him.

"There was no more talking for some time, and I kept turning over in my mind what would happen when we got to Exeter. That would be my chance, I thought, and no good moving before and running the chance of being kicked to death. I tell you, sir, I never went through such a time as that—never in all my life.

"At last we got near Exeter.

"'Tickets please,' was the next thing. My man was as cool as a cucumber.

"'Haven't got my pass,' says he.

"He knew his porter's dress 'et him travel free.

"'Got to see the station master at Exeter.'

"'Where from?' asks the ticket collector.

"'Lydford; name—Joe Snell; all right. Goin' back to-night.'

"The door was shut. He had got my name too, as pat as if he'd had it at baptism. I remembered a letter there was in the pocket of my coat from my girl, and I felt like shaking the breath out of him.

"Just as we were slowing into Exeter, says he to the young lady:

"'Now miss, let me take your bags and rugs and follow me. I'll see you all right.'

"'Now I'll be rid of you,' thinks I, 'and if I'm half a man you'll not get off!'

"But just as I was thinking that, he leaned over and whispered something to the farmer. I couldn't hear the words nor see their faces but the farmer made a sound as if he was startled

"'Good Lord!' cries he, and there was another whisper. Just then the train stopped. Quick as thought out jumps the convict and helps the lady. The farmer follows as if he couldn't get out quick enough, and the door was shut and in another moment *locked*, as I could hear by the click of the key.

"What was this for? I tr ed to wriggle out from under the seat, though I could not get my hands free or stand up, for that wretch had bound me so fast. Then I heard voices outside the door, and the farmer's wheeze as he told his tale. Five minutes passed, perhaps. I could see faces watching me through the window, but when I tried to lift up my head it was all swimming and confused like. The next thing I knew was that I was being dragged out and carried along the platform by two strong men. They took me inside the station-master's office and made me sit down. Then they took the handkerchief from my mouth. I was half choked and kept gasping before I could speak.

"Then I begged to have my hands undone, for the strap was cutting my flesh.

"'All right, my man,' said one, and I saw that he was a policeman. 'You won't do much mischief now.'

"'It was a good piece of work to nobble *you*,' says another. 'Where's the porter—what's his name?'

"'Joe Snell,' answers the wheezy farmer. 'He's gone with a lady, and he'll be back in a minute. He asked me to keep guard.'

"'I'm Joe Snell!' cried I. 'He is the convict who went with the lady. He's the rascal!' There was a laugh.

"'Yes, we know all about it,' said the sergeant.

"'Of course *you're* not an escaped convict from Dartmoor—Oh no!'

"Then I got desperate. My head got queer again and I didn't know what happened.

"But when I came to I was lying on the floor with something under my head. The farmer was talking.

"'That's exactly how it all happened,' he was saying, 'and a pretty sort of game to be travelling with a mad convict. But you've got 'im, and now you've got to keep 'im, and I must go.'

"So I was left with the policeman and station-master and some others.

"'Well, where's that there porter?' said one.

"'Takin' his time with the lady, considerin' the company as is waitin',' said another.

"'Look here,' says I, feelin' a bit better, 'I ain't no convict. Look at my hair—is it close-cropped? Look at my clothes under this darned fit-out and see if they don't belong to Joe Snell.'

"Then says one to the other, 'Never thought of his hair—but it's got no prison cut.' Then they fell to examining my clothes, and they soon saw that what I said was true. Then there was a bit of a shine, I promise you, sir, for all this time—and it wasn't far short of twenty minutes—the sham porter had been making off with the young lady's bag, and no doubt money in it, and my clothes to keep him from being found out.

"They telegraphed to Lydford and the station-master came on by the next train and identified me. By ten o'clock that night I was in bed comfortable at the station-master's house at Exeter, with them convict clothes taken away by the police.

"I was taken to hospital next day, for that bangin' about of my head had made me bad, and they said I was ravin' about the convict for days and nights. And that's how it was I never went back to Lydford."

"And, the convict?" inquired the passenger, looking at his watch, and pulling up his fur collar.

"Never heard of again so far as I know," said the porter. "He managed well and no mistake. It was a dark night and he got off with the lady's bag and rugs. And, whatever he did with himself, *my* clothes was seen no more. Here's your train, sir."

"Clever fellow that," said the passenger, as he walked across the platform to his carriage. "I should like to know what became of him."

Something in his voice made the porter look up quickly as he held out his hand for what the passenger offered him. The next moment the train had moved away and the sneering face was lost to view.

"Could it have been his brother?" the startled porter was asking himself, "or——?" But there was no answer to his question.

E. Dawson.

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My Sleeve-Link.

I HAD strolled into the park to pass the time that hung heavy on my hands. On the morrow I was to take part in what was, at least to me and one other, an important affair; and nothing is more trying than waiting for a crisis.

On a grass plot not far from where I lounged, a couple of French *bonnes* were gossiping, while the children they watched chased each other over the green sward. I could occasionally catch words as the little ones shouted to each other, and I knew they were English—at least they spoke the English tongue. One of them, a little girl of perhaps six or seven years, had dashed by me several times, with flying ringlets. In her sash was that which plainly showed she had disregarded the instructions posted everywhere in this German park: "*Es ist nicht erlaubt Blumen abzupflücken.*" "It is not permitted to pluck the flowers." In one of her flights I stopped her.

"Don't you see," I said, pointing with my stick to one of these notices, "they won't let anyone pick the flowers?"

She looked from me to the notice, then at her flowers; then fixed her eyes straight on mine. But her mind was not easily made up to such an informal introduction, and she soon dropped her eyes again to the flowers.

"Suppose a policeman should come along," I went on, "and find these flowers in your sash?"

Her brow knit in a frown, but still she did not deign to answer.

"Never mind; I'll try to get him to let you off, if he comes."

"But if you can't?" said a little voice. It was so little and so timid that I scarcely heard it.

"I can try. Won't you give me one of the flowers?"

In a twinkling she forgot her fears. A new question came up to drive the first right out of her little brain. She began to pick over the flowers, hunting for one worthy of a gift.

On the road at the foot of the slope one of the guardians of the park was loitering in the sun, his hands clasped behind him, his sabre swinging like the pendulum of a clock as he walked with his head thrown back, that he might see from under his helmet. Presently, instead of stopping when he came to the end of his beat, he kept on, round a curve in the road, disappearing for a few moments behind a clump of trees.

"The policeman!" I exclaimed to the child. "He's coming."

"Where?"

Her cheek whitened.

"Down there, behind the trees."

She looked anxiously in the direction I pointed.

"Give me the flowers," I said. "He'll think I took them."

"No."

"Yes, quick."

"No, no," she cried, impatiently stamping her diminutive foot.

"Why not?"

"You didn't take them."

"Well, come and sit by me, I won't let him hurt you."

She came and climbed upon the seat beside me. The policeman came on, professedly looking at the flowerbeds or the trees, or up at the sky, but really at the maids. As he came near where we were sitting, I could hear my *protégée's* little heart beating like a toy-drumstick. When he came opposite us, what was my astonishment to see her take the flowers from her girdle and hold them toward him, and call out:

"I took your flowers, Mr. P'liceman. Are you going to take me to prison?"

Fortunately she spoke in English, and not till a moment after he had passed. He kept on without noticing us, round the road which bent in an ellipse about the sward.

Then my little girl buried her face against my shoulder and burst into tears.

"Never mind, little one; he shouldn't have troubled you; I'd have spitted him on his own steel first," I said comfortingly.

In another moment there was a transition. Undried tears stood on her cheek, but every other vestige of distress had disappeared. She stepped down off the seat.

"Are you going to leave me?" I asked.

"Yes."

"So soon?"

"I may come back again if—"

"If the policeman comes, you little coward—no, you little heroine. Won't you give me a kiss before you go?"

She looked down on the walk, neither assenting to nor dissenting from my proposition. I drew her towards me, and taking her head between my two hands, looked into her face.

I had quarrelled with my chum, an Englishman, like myself. The quarrel arose from nothing, but it led to an assignment for a duel, after the German fashion. I was enraged, yet I had an uncomfortable feeling that I was in fault.

Presently she asked; "Have you got a girl?"

"No, I haven't a girl,—or boy, or mother, or anyone?"

"I don't like that."

Her big blue eyes were full of sympathy.

"Deedie!" called one of the maids.

"I must go now. Emilie is calling me."

"Go and ask Emilie if you may come back and stay with me a little longer."

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"Will you wait here till I come?"

"Certainly."

I leaned back on the wooden seat and watched an animated conversation between the *bonne* and the child, speaking, from what I could hear, in French. Presently she came running back with the information that she might stay a little longer.

I sat for some time trying to keep her with me, for at the sight of a butterfly or a humming-bird she would be off like the wind. When she came back from one of these flights I drew her to me to caress her. I asked her about a bead necklace she wore, and who gave it to her; and took hold of it to examine it, that my hand might touch her warm neck. And all the time she prattled, and asked me questions, and told me about people whose identity she didn't trouble herself to explain, as though I had always known them.

I was forgetting everything in this innocence, this diminutive combination of strength and weakness. She insisted on decorating me wi h the flowers she had appropriated, and soon made me look like a figure in a flower-bed. Then she stood off and looked at me, and clapped her hands in great glee and laughed, and I laughed myself.

"Deedie!"

"Your nurse is calling you again; you must go."

"Are you coming here to-morrow?" she asked.

The question startled me. It brought me back to my quarrel. Where might I be to-morrow?

"Do you wish me to come?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Very much?"

"Ever so much."

An expression of pain must have passed over my face, for she asked:

"Why do you look sorry?"

"Go. But stay a moment. What can I give you for a keepsake?" I felt in my vest-pocket for some trinket, but could find nothing. "Here." I pulled a cameo sleeve-button from my cuff and handed it to her.

She drew back. "Mamma won't let me take things from people."

"Take it, and if your mamma won't let you keep it, you can bring it back to me another day."

"To-morrow?"

"Go! go! good-bye."

I wound my arms about her and kissed her. When I opened them it was like letting a bird out of a cage. She flew like a swallow near the ground across the grass, to rejoin the nurses and the other children. Then they all arose and walked away.

* * * * *

Four weeks elapsed before I went into the park again. Then my complexion was many shades whiter, and two stout canes lay beside me on the seat on which I sat, the same on which I rested when I made the acquaintance of Deedie. I was convalescent. I had taken part in what I feel that I speak assuredly when I say was my last *affaire d'honneur*. I had been severely wounded.

It was now midsummer, and I was glad to be protected from the sun by an elm which spread its branches near me. I had come to the park with a vain hope of meeting my friend—my little girl who had so charmed me by her innocent prattle and, more than all, by her childish exhibition of moral courage.

While I sat I meditated on my parting with her a month before—the disappointment she must have experienced when she came to the park the next day, and did not find me.

The next day! What had it brought for me?

Just before dawn of that eventful morning I lay dreaming—dreaming that I walked in the park with Deedie—yet not Deedie the child. She had grown to be a woman. The park, too, had changed. The trees had grown wonderfully; saplings which the day before had only reached to my head were now twice as high. And Deedie—she was not the little romp of yesterday, but wore a countenance of deep seriousness—she walked beside me calmly and with a certain awe-inspiring stateliness. Her features retained all the delicacy of a child, but added the sympathy of a woman. And she reproached, asking me if I would kill a man whom I had insulted.

Then I felt a vice-like grip on my arm, and found myself awakened. A strapping youngster about my own age, with a box under his arm, was visible in the glimmer of early dawn.

"Never mind the girl," he said; "get up."

"What girl?"

"The one you've been calling in your sleep."

The laugh that accompanied his words jarred upon me, scarcely awakened from my vivid dream.

"What is it?" I asked, bewildered.

"Here;" and he tapped with his finger on the box.

"Yes, yes, I see."

I threw off the covering and sprang up.

* * * * *

There is the policeman walking on the same beat, his sabre swinging, his head thrown back. But where is the child? I scan the different groups near me. No. She isn't here. I should know her among a thousand children.

But to return to that eventful morning. I was an excellent shot; he was a bungler. I had tried to make him a better, but he was too clumsy. He could handle neither a foil nor a pistol, and hadn't the delicacy of sight or touch to learn.

I cast a glance at my adversary's face. He was calm and resolute. I saw as plainly as words could have told me the condition of his mind. Besides, I knew him well. His nature was eminently practical. He was the most stolid, matter-of fact man I ever knew, yet honest and steadfast at heart. He had determined that he must kill me, or I would kill him; and he had decided to kill me if he could.

We were not on the field ten minutes. The distance was paced. I was handed my pistol and sent to my station. The word was given.

But other words sounded in my ears with the signal to fire—the words spoken to me by Deedie in my dream.

Both shots rang out as one, sharp and spiteful on the quiet morning air. I purposely fired aside from the living mark before me. My adversary stood unhurt; I had a bullet in my side.

I saw a figure striding towards me. It looked strange and tall and indistinct, but I knew it was my adversary.

"Are you satisfied?" I asked.

"Satisfied! Good heaven! are you badly hurt?"

"It was all my fault," I extended my hand. He attempted to take it, but the seconds interfered. "We haven't time for palaver; we must get away from here at once."

A carriage in which the medical student had come to the ground stood in the road near by. I was hurried

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into it, or rather carried, for I was fainting. The doctor and my second got in with me, and we drove to my rooms. The others hurried off in a different direction.

All that morning I lay on my bed, experiencing a mental, if not a physical, convalescence. I had been badly wounded, but this was nothing. My hot head had been turned into gentler veins of thought. I had been saved from a bitter memory, a fiend that would have pursued me through life. I was in an ecstacy when I realized that I had not killed my friend—that my hands were bloodless. I was thinking of the diminutive shield which had been thrust between me and crime—the little maid I had met in the park.

She is perhaps seven, I mused; I am twenty. Seven from twenty leaves thirteen. When she is twenty I shall be thirty-three. That's not a great difference. Then I made a vow—a reckless, absurd boyish vow. Ah! the hot impulse of youth; into what follies does it lead us!

One of my first acts on getting out was to take my remaining sleeve-button to a jeweller and have a pin attached, that I might wear it in my scarf. Perhaps she will do the same, I argued; and I have an abiding faith that by this means we shall one day recognise each other. There was another link by which I might know her: Deedie, I learned, was the diminutive for Delia; so Delia must be her Christian name.

I sat in the park till sunset. I saw again in fancy the group of a month before walking away, and Deedie dancing backward and holding up her token and throwing me kisses. Then the figure melted from my fancy as it had faded from my eyes before. I arose and walked away. For the first time in my life I experienced a sensation of loneliness.

After that, on bright days I often visited the park, but not to find my little love. Doubtless she had returned to England. At last I completed my studies and left the university.

* * * * *

Twelve years passed, during which, if my child friend did not pass entirely out of my mind, she at least became a very indistinct image on my memory. I had become a quiet, matter of fact man, with no fancy whatever for the sight of blood, and without the slightest predilection for making vows. The one I had made so long before I was not disposed to regard as strictly binding; and should any reason occur for breaking it, I did not look upon it as a serious obstacle.

I was sitting one summer afternoon on the porch of a hotel facing the beach, chatting with a friend—a lady. It was the hour when the young lady sojourners, dressed in tasteful costumes, promenaded to and fro; quite enough of them, I thought, to form a battalion of beauty.

Suddenly in one of the groups that went by, appeared one who, as she passed, nodded pleasantly to the lady with whom I was sitting. The salutation was unstudied, yet not familiar—a happy combination of cordiality and dignity. The smile that accompanied it sent a thrill through me in a twinkling.

"Who is that?" I inquired, quickly.

"Miss Ward."

"Her Christian name?"

"Edith."

"No, no, her other name?"

"She has no other."

"Isn't it Delia?"

"Simply Edith. Would you like to know her?"

I rested back in the chair from which I had started.

"Thank you; I'll not trouble you. I shall not be here long."

The next afternoon I was standing at the door with my friend, taking my leave. A bevy of young girls approached, and one of them, wishing to speak with my friend, stopped for the purpose. In a moment I was introduced to the whole party. One of the young ladies was Miss Ward.

There was about this girl a certain high-born reserve which alternated with an engaging frankness and sprightliness. There were two sides to her disposition, the one merry, the other serious. A low melodious laugh expressed keen enjoyment to perfection; but if anything occurred to divert her from merriment to seriousness, there came without warning that which inspired me with a kind of awe.

Instead of departing at once, as I intended, I did not leave the hotel for four weeks. I prolonged my stay, notwithstanding a number of resolutions to the contrary, until I began to censure myself for being weak. At last, perceiving that my stay was noticed by my friends, I resolved to leave immediately.

On the evening on which I made this new—and I determined it should prove an irrevocable—resolution, I chanced to be sitting with—Miss Ward. The moon was at the full. It seems singular to me now that I should have presumed to speak so confidingly to one I had known so short a time. Besides, my companion had not encouraged any special confidence on my part. Indeed, I regretted that she had ceased to treat me with the unconventionality of the others, and seemed at times a trifle constrained.

What it was that led me to confide in her on the evening mentioned I can scarcely conceive, unless it was that exquisite hour—the most delightful to me of all hours of the day—when the newly-risen full moon stands on the horizon as if pausing to survey the landscape, and then begins to rise, a great illuminated ball, in the heavens.

Whatever was the cause, I touched upon several episodes in my life, among them the story of my meeting little Delia in the park in Germany, twelve years before. I gave a minute account of what occurred. "Here," I said, putting my finger on my scarf-pin, "is the mate to a keepsake I gave her."

"What a beautiful cameo!" she looked at it closely. "I think I have noticed it in your scarf before."

I took it from its place and handed it to her. She bent over it to examine the carving in the mingling twilight and moonlight.

"You haven't told me," she said, without looking up, "what it was that engaged your attention on the day after you parted with the little girl."

I hesitated.

"That would scarcely interest a woman."

"But I wish to know."

I told her of my quarrel with my friend; my dream before going out to the field; my firing aside, and receiving my adversary's bullet. As I gave the short story she bent closer to the object she was examining, until her face was entirely hidden from me. When I had finished we sat some time in silence.

"This pin," she remarked at last, "must have been cut at Rome."

"It was."

"And the child—" she went on, "she really prevented your becoming—murderer?"

"Would you have so regarded me?" I looked at her anxiously.

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"Yes, and more"; she raised her eyes and fixed them full upon mine; "a coward."

Great heavens! how like the look of the face of Delia, in my dream of years before!

"And you have given up all expectation of ever seeing the child again?" she asked, turning her eyes from me to the cameo.

"I scarcely know if I should wish to meet her."

"Why?"

"Under an impulse of gratitude for the unknowing part she had taken in preventing my being a—murderer ——"

"And a coward," she interrupted.

"And a coward," I admitted, "I made a silly, sentimental vow."

"What vow?" she frowned.

"That no other person should be my wife; that I would seek her, and when found, if ever, I would win her——"

"Supposing that she would be willing," she added, not giving me time to finish.

It was plain that I had antagonised her.

"Of course."

"Well?"

"Since then"—I looked out at the peaceful moon, at the deepening shadows, "since then I have met one who has driven the child-image from my mind—I fear from my heart."

We sat without speaking, each waiting for the other to break the silence.

"You have spoiled a pretty story," she said, somewhat sadly. "You should have been true to the little girl. How do you know but what she is treasuring the mate to your pin?"

"She was too young."

"How old did you say?"

"Seven, perhaps."

"Seven! That's not too young. I was impressed myself at that age."

"May I ask, are you true to that impression?"

She hesitated.

"I have treasured an ideal. But I must go in," she added, in another moment; and rising, she moved towards a window opening on the balcony.

"Good-night."

She stepped in at the window. As she crossed the sill and entered the room she turned. A smile, a frank, happy smile broke over her face. It bespoke the merry side of her disposition. In another moment she was gone.

That night I dreamed. I was again in the park in Germany. It was night. The image of a former dream walked beside me. The features of that image had long ago faded from my memory. Now they were the features of Miss Ward.

"Would you kill him because you insulted him? because you struck him?" The words came strangely, as out of a dead past.

"No, no; I will kill no one. I am no longer a boy. I thank Heaven I escaped this dreadful result of that boyish folly. It was you who taught me what is true courage; teach me now what is love?"

The next evening I met Miss Ward again. I expected it would be my last evening at the sea-side that summer. We sat in the nook where we had sat together so often before. Whether it was the prospect of my departure, or a suddenly imparted knowledge of the condition of my feelings, I do not know to this day, but the spell that had been gathering about me for weeks appeared suddenly intensified. Led on, it seemed, by a sort of fatality, I suddenly burst into a torrent of words which I had never dreamt of speaking when I joined her. I poured out my feelings in a number of short, glowing sentences.

I well remember her first words after I had ceased to speak. They conveyed to me the first knowledge of how deeply I was stung.

"But your vow?" she said. Startled, I had forgotten it. "Do you think it would be right for you to break it?"

I was silent.

"You must keep it."

Something told me that, however I might regard its keeping or its breaking, there was no compromise to be hoped for from the only woman who would be a temptation for me to break it.

She had been toying with my cameo, which she had desired to examine again. As she spoke the last words she arose and handed it back to me. I interpreted the act to mean a parting.

"I cannot. I will not," I cried, passionately.

"You can and you will," she replied. There was a sparkle in her eye. The other features of her face only indicated sympathy, kindliness.

"Good-bye," I faltered.

"Rather say adieu," she said, softly. She took my hand and pressed it kindly. "I shall have a word to say to you before you go," she added. "May I see you here to-morrow evening, when the moon rises?"

"Better go at once," I replied, bitterly.

"Shall I see you?" she repeated.

I bowed a silent assent.

The interval between this parting and the next evening seemed interminable. I believed her decision to be irrevocable; but what lover will not hope so long as there is a des re? Still, I wished it all over.

She came. She was clad in the light drapery of midsummer. The moonlight fell on her figure, softening the gauzy folds of her dress and blending them with the environing shadow. She was to me a human apparition; substantial yet unsubstantial, spiritual loveliness in human beauty. Why was she not less beautiful or less conscientious?

As she approached, my eye was caught by a flash of something, evidently metallic, where a lace handkerchief crossed her bosom. I was led by some unaccountable attraction to fasten my gaze on this object, which I knew I had not seen before, and which, as she drew nearer, shaped itself more distinctly. In another moment it flashed upon me what it was.

And what was it? To this day the answer brings a thrill of pleasure. It was the mate to my cameo.

I sprang across the short distance that separated us.

"And you are Delia?"

"No, Edith."

"How did you come by that cameo?"

"You gave it to me."

"And the name Delia?—explain."

"That was my father's doing. It was first Edie. Papa corrupted it to Deedie."

A single letter had misled me for twelve years

"And you have kept my souvenir?"

"I was forbidden to do so. I went to the park the day after I met you to return it. You were not there."

"No, I was not there. And you remember me?"

"I have not entirely forgotten," she said, dropping her eyes, "though I was rather young to——"

She did not finish.

"Love?" I asked, trembling.

ANTHONY WILDE.

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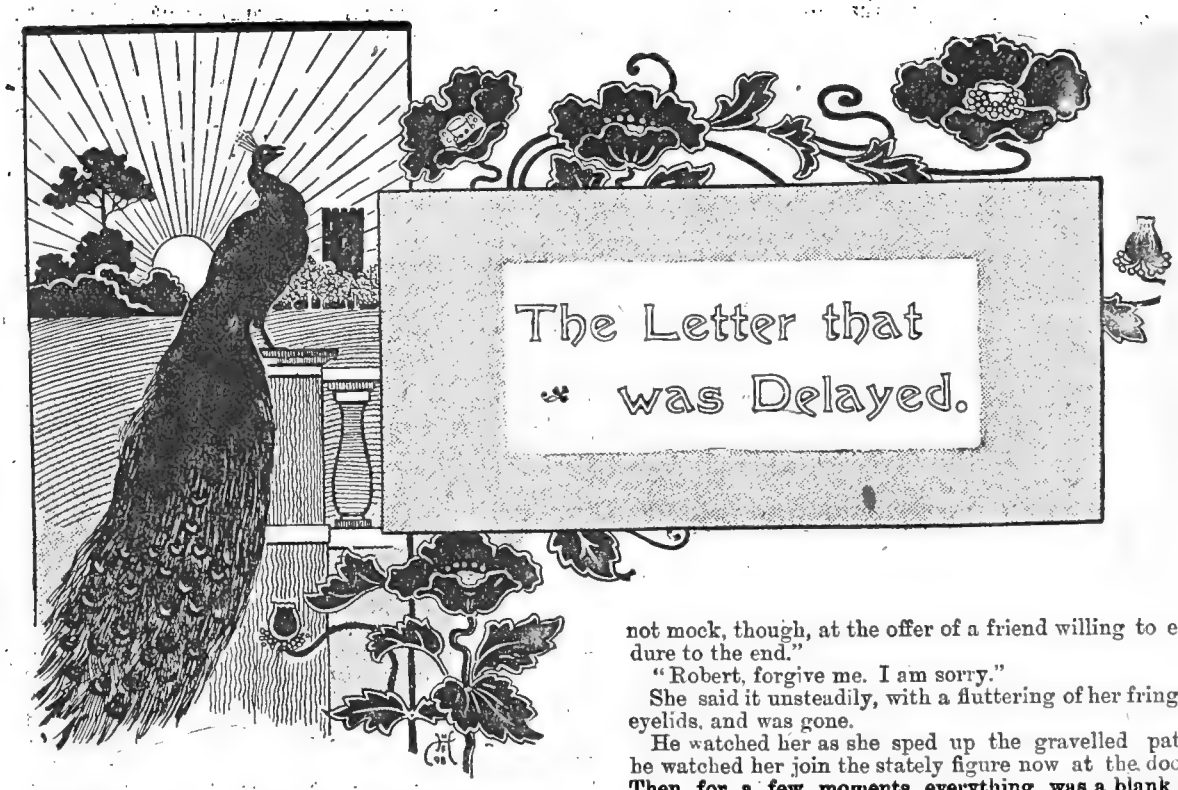

THEY stood at the little gate together for the last time.

"Impossible!" she had said, in her disdainful way, with a flash of those wonderful eyes, whose false glamour Robert Strong had come to love only too well.

"Impossible?" He repeated it over and over, hardly knowing what he said. He took the pretty fair face in his two hands, and held it tightly.

"Nelly, come out of the damp," called a thin, affected voice.

Robert only bent closer to the face beneath him.

"She will have more to answer for than you," he said, thickly, "and I am glad of that; it softens the bitterness. Yet, even now, when I am feeling so keenly how cruelly you have lured me on, I cannot hate you, Nelly."

She shivered and made a motion to free herself.

"Stand still," he said, almost roughly, and then he loosed her at once, and moved back.

And the thin voice came to them again, this time a little sharper still.

As the girl turned, her eyes swept into Robert's a swift, sudden appeal.

It was strange how the moonlight brought out in that one fleeting look a weird, indefinable foreshadowing of future suffering.

"Heaven be praised," cried Robert, catching at her dress, "that I love you still, for by the strength of that love I will yet save you. Will you let me? Will you send for me?"

"Mr. Strong, you are sentimental. My aunt is waiting for me. Good-night." She spoke coldly and proudly.

"Oh, Nelly!" he cried in pain, "you believe that sorrow can never touch you. I hope it never may! Do not mock, though, at the offer of a friend willing to endure to the end."

"Robert, forgive me. I am sorry."

She said it unsteadily, with a fluttering of her fringed eyelids, and was gone.

He watched her as she sped up the gravelled path; he watched her join the stately figure now at the door. Then for a few moments everything was a blank to him. He realised at last how his life's love had been thrown away.

Robert Strong buried himself deeper than ever among his models and machinery after the de arture of Nelly and her aunt, and strove to forget the wild dream of his love.

With the strength of a giant he rode over his broad acres, directing, over-looking. With a surplus of zeal he carried on his work till his new-fangled notions and machines made the worthy country people wonder if he had gone mad, and clothed his name with fame and repute in the world outside.

"Yes, yes, yes," Robert's mother would say when the neighbours came in and talked over what a great man Robert was becoming, "my boy knows what he's about. I'm old-fashioned myself, and don't understand all his new-fangled names and ideas, but I've got faith in him, and I hope to live long enough to see the end."

But it was willed otherwise, and one morning the old lady was found dead in her bed, with a pleasant smile on her wrinkled face.

Desolate was the great house without the dear mother. Papers and models and dusty scientific books lost their relish, and, drive it away as he would, the image of Nelly rose before him.

In every leisure moment, at night, in his dreams, he saw her, and always with those last wavering words on her lips: "Robert, forgive me. I am sorry."

"She shall see how I can forgive her," said he. "She is in trouble. I will go to her at once."

And shrewd, clear-headed Robert Strong, who was so swiftly and surely making his name in the world by his deep insight into scientific and mathematical knowledge, packed his bag with all the nervous fidgetiness of a raw school boy, and hurried away, haunted with a morbid

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dread lest the pretty, fair face that had played him false had come to sorrow.

But the pretty face, fairer than ever, beamed out on him from under a pink-lined parasol and a chip hat wreathed with the twining convolvulus.

Alas! for the wild chimeras that had taken possession of his brain! He drew back into the embrasure of the window, with his face clouding.

Another presence invaded Robert's lookout. A gentleman in appearance, as could be seen at a glance, evidently unaware that the window was already tenanted.

He seemed to be searching for some one in the crowd outside. At length his gaze fastened upon Nelly.

"Ah, there you are!" he hissed, with an evil look. "Coquette, is it? None knows that better than I! Ah, my beauty, smile on in your insolence while you may, for my evil wishes will follow you."

Robert Strong laid his hand heavily on the stranger's shoulder.

"I am that lady's friend," he said, with a motion towards her. "You are answerable to me for the language you have just used. Here is my card."

Robert towered up in his wrath grandly. Here was a champion not to be trifled with.

Let us give Henry Daland, for that was the stranger's name, credit as a rare tactician. In that one surprised moment he knew his man and took his cue.

"Robert Strong!" he read the name from the card. "Your name is familiar to me, and I would stand well with you. For the ungentlemanly words you so accidentally heard me utter, I indeed owe an apology, and to you as her friend I most humbly tender it. Perhaps if you knew the circumstances, you might pity as well as blame."

He threw an indescribable pathos and grace into his speech, and his voice trembled in irrepressible sadness at the end.

Robert thought of his own suffering, and held out his hand.

"Let us be friends," said he, "since we are brothers in affliction."

"It seems as though I should go mad," said Henry Daland. "I was so sure of winning her, and she encouraged me above all others till the peer came. That is he, riding in the carriage with her."

"Poor lad," said Robert, clasping him tighter.

In the evening the two stood arm in arm at the end of the long hall, and looked at Nelly standing in the centre.

There were other cheeks as fair, other faces as lovely, but by the supreme witchery of her power she was queen of them all.

Once she swept so close that her silken skirt brushed against them, and a rose fell from the dusky brown of her hair at their feet. Henry Daland was about to crush it with his foot, but Robert picked it up.

In the morning Robert started for home, leaving no word or sign for Nelly, and his new friend went with him.

The old farmhouse had a visitor for two or three weeks. A pleasant spoken, agreeable gentleman everybody agreed, and one whom Robert liked right heartily, and when at last he bid him good-bye, he did it with honest regret.

Sometimes those first words of Henry Daland's would come back to him strangely and unpleasantly, and then, ashamed of even one traitorous thought towards the one he called friend, he would take himself to task, saying:

"To think the poor fellow meant anything, when he was so cut up and dazed."

* * * * *

"Please, sir," said the postmaster's small boy, twisting his battered hat awkwardly in one hand, and holding a diminutive letter gingerly in the other, "father says as how this 'ere got lost somehow or nuther in atween the hind leg of the shelf and the iron safe, and he hopes as how it won't matter so much, seeing it's a small one."

Robert snatched the letter. He felt instinctively what was to come. It needed not the signature of "Nelly" to tell him whom it was from.

"Come, come," she said. "Oh, Robert, you are my only hope! Save me, or I am lost."

His shaggy eyebrows almost met as his eye caught the date. He groaned aloud when he thought of the months that her incoherent prayer had lain neglected amongst the dust and litter of the country post-office.

While his neighbours were wondering at his departure, Robert Strong, possessed with a fierce unrest, paced backwards and forwards on the deck of an ocean steamer, outward bound.

With tide, steam, and wind all in his favour, it seemed but a snail's pace he travelled at. He shuddered when he thought of Nelly's letter, and the time lost.

And when at last he reached Capetown, and found the house in ruins, and no trace of her, he was almost ready, in the first weakness of disappointment, to lie down and accept the fate that so persistently followed him.

But Robert Strong was not one to give up easily, and soon he set himself to work again with all his accustomed determination. Baffled and foiled, he woke to the knowledge that some secret enemy dogged his footsteps and turned back his sure success.

He sat one evening in a café, thinking this over, when a man at one of the tables behind him fell down in a fit.

Robert had no recognition of the features as they lay convulsed before him, but as they smoothed themselves out he saw Henry Daland, gentlemanly and aristocratic in appearance still, but fearfully haggard and emaciated.

Nobody knew him, and there was nothing about him to prove his identity. Insensible, he was conveyed to Robert Strong's rooms and left to his care.

And tenderly did Robert nurse him all through the terrible illness that the physicians declared must prove fatal.

"Nelly, Nelly!" the sick man would cry in his delirium, and then, defiantly, "I will see her! Stand back!" wrestling with his arms as if fighting a crowd; then, as if he had seen something frightful, he would cower and hide under the bed-clothes. "Is she alive? Did I murder her?" in a whisper, and with a loud laugh. "No, no; go away. That is not she. She is deceiving me again. Where is she?"

And it grew upon Robert slowly as he watched, that from Henry Daland's lips the mystery would stand revealed.

Anxiously did he wait the return of reason. After weeks of suspense it came.

Calming down from a furious paroxysm, he lay as if exhausted for several hours, and then opening his eyes fully upon Robert, he asked, rationally:

"How long have I been here?"

He was propped up with pillows, and motioned for Robert to come nearer.

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"If you do not already know," said he, "I have something to tell you."

"About Nelly?"

Henry Daland nodded.

"And you are the one who threw me off the track; you betrayed me; you brought peril to her."

Another gesture of assent.

"Traitor!" cried Robert.

"Stay! I have not long to live. Listen and I will tell you all. A year ago I made a friend of you for an object; otherwise you would have run me to the ground. In consequence of the honest faith you credited me with, I was enabled to follow her unmolested. I followed her to here, and saw a millionaire succeed the English lord."

Henry Daland's eyes grew brilliant with excitement; his hollow cheeks flushed."

"I kept a magnificent house. I spent my money like water. This gave me the *entrée* to the superb madam and her beautiful neice, Nelly Harland.

"Fate favoured me. By the overturning of a carriage Nelly's uncle was suddenly killed. His wife was brought home in hysterics, and died in a week. Nelly, herself, was prostrated by the blow, and her friends fell away like autumn leaves, for it was found that her uncle had died bankrupt.

"Here then was my time. I concocted a scheme, which I may truly say was fiendish."

The colour had faded by this time from the speaker's cheek, and he lay a moment gasping for breath.

Robert Strong forgot he was a dying man and leaned forward.

"Do not dare to fail me now," he said passionately, "or——"

"Hush!" said Henry Daland, with difficulty. "What are earthly threats to me! Have patience and you shall hear all. I hired the house; I bribed the servants; all this unknown to her. By and by she grew better; she came downstairs; she asked questions.

"At length she was told all by the housekeeper, and coming in upon her she fell in a dead faint at my feet. Sending the housekeeper away, I held her in my arms till she revived.

"In her first weakness she was obliged to submit, but soon she freed herself and stood indignant before me.

"'Do you not know that you are hateful to me?' she said. 'Do you think I could ever consent to marry you?'

"'I am no more particular about that than you,' said I, twiddling my watch-chain.

"'How dare you stay in my house?'

"'Softly,' I lisped, 'it's my house, and you know it, and I don't risk as much as you.'

"Her eyes blazed.

"'I will leave.'

"I mocked her with a reverence.

"'Simply impossible, for I am your gaoler.'

"For a month she made every effort to escape, but I thwarted her at every turn. At last she got desperate."

"It was then she wrote to me," groaned Robert, with the big veins bulging out in his forehead. He shook the dying man, who was fast growing unconscious.

"Tell me what happened," he said.

"She jumped from her window in the third storey."

"On the pavement?" cried Robert, in horror.

Henry Daland took no notice of the question; his eyes were glazing.

"By all your hopes of eternal forgiveness," said Robert in agony, "say if she lives."

With a desperate effort the stiff lips articulated something, then the jaw fell—he was gone.

Down the street, with quick, unconscious tread strode Robert Strong.

He at once made his way to the nearest hospital. The grey-haired porter stood at the open gate, and he passed in without seeing him.

He walked through the sunshiny court-yard and through the cool corridors. They were all untenanted; he wished to meet someone now of whom he could make enquiries.

There was a rumbling down one of the long passages, and just as Robert turned the corner, a little wicker carriage appeared in sight, propelled by the occupant, a woman.

It stood still as he advanced and asked—

"Where can I find Miss Harland?"

"Here," said the woman, meekly and gravely, her hands folded on her breast.

"Yes, I know she is here somewhere, but where can I see her?" said Robert, gently, wondering (strange he should have troubled himself then) if this woman's face (it was hidden by her bonnet) was as calm and dead as her voice.

"Here," she answered again, as meekly as before.

"But you do not understand. I am a friend, a very old friend of Miss Harland. She sent for me a long time ago, and I have just been able to come. I have been looking for her a great while, and I have only now found where she is. Tell me just where to look for her in this asylum."

The pale, thin hands unloosened the white strings about her throat and the stiff, starched bonnet was taken slowly from the head, and for the third time the sober voice spoke.

"Robert Strong, Ellen Harland is here."

It brought the great man weeping like a child at her feet.

He had been prepared for anything.

"Only not this, not this," he moaned, covering his face.

He wept at sight of the beautiful face so scarred and wan and wasted; the beautiful eyes so dulled and dimmed with pain; the beautiful voice so cold and passionless.

She tried to comfort him.

"Though the joys of this life are passed from me," she said, "I am content, thought I shall never walk out again in the world, I am at peace; and never henceforth, in this body, to be freed from pain, yet am I happy."

And Robert strong was comforted, for her voice had lost its deadness.

And he could go away and leave her; he could bear even to put an ocean between her and him; for he knew, though she had lost this puny world, she had gained an entrance to life everlasting.

George Wolfé.

Who is Your Double?

The Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* is offering £10, to be awarded to the five pairs of people who most closely resemble one another. Photographs must be sent in envelopes marked "Likeness" to reach the office of *P.W.* by Monday, March 20th.

It should be a very interesting thing to you to find out whether there is any person who exists with a physiognomy practically the same as your own.

All photographs should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope sufficiently large to carry them. For details of this competition you should look in the current number of *P.W.*

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THE WIZARD OF RED GULCH.

ARTHUR ARMSTRONG, of Montreal, was collector for the Golden Gate Iron Works builders of stamp-mills and other heavy machinery. He was on his first trip into one of the interior counties of California, a mountainous, mining district, where the coaches of the Beaverville, Red Gulch and Gold Run Stage Company are still the only medium of public conveyance. On this occasion Armstrong was the only passenger, for Joe Carter, the noted bandit, locally known as, "The Holy Terror," had robbed the stage the day before, and the incident had caused a temporary decline in the traffic of the line. Even Wells, Fargo and Company, had no treasure to forward that day, and therefore there was no shot-gun messenger aboard.

But the driver on the morning run, from the railway station into Beaverville, was a genial fellow, and, stimulated by a few draughts from Armstong's capacious flask and by some of his choice cigars, gave a most entertaining sketch of the robbery of the day before. Stopping at the spot where it had taken place, he described its minutest details. He pointed out the tree under which the passengers had been "lined up," while Carter had picked their pockets. Carter's style, although peremptory, was very quiet, and he had treated the passengers with great consideration, apologising for the annoying necessity of appropriating their valuables.

The driver alone had made resistance and had not been treated quite so gently. In fact, he had been "all shot up," and was now lying at Beaverville in a critical condition. His friends were in hot pursuit of Carter, intent upon lynching him if caught.

The road to Beaverville soon leaves the broad valleys that are traversed by the railroad, and winds for a distance through the foothills. Thence it penetrates the Sierras, leading deeper and deeper into a rugged country with small and scattered settlements most of which are mining-camps. It goes up and down long declivities, some abrupt, some gently sloping. A part of the way is shaded by magnificent forests of pine and fir. The robbery had occurred not far from Beaverville, a rude wayside station at which Armstrong and the driver arrived an hour or so after noon. Emerging from the dining-room after dinner, Armstrong found his friend, the driver, smoking on the little verandah.

"I leave you here," the driver remarked.

"Sorry," said Armstrong. "I appreciated your company this morning. Who takes the reins?"

"Jim Willing, one of the best drivers on the road, and a jolly good fellow. You'll enjoy the afternoon."

When the team, six wiry broncos, was brought from the stable, Armstrong took the former seat on the box. "Good-bye," he called to his late companion, reaching down a handful of cigars. "Have another?"

"Thanks. Good-bye."

As the horses were attached, Armstrong heard one of the men say that there wasn't a fresh horse left, not even a saddle horse. Everything had been pressed into service in the pursuit of Carter, who had headed for Nevada. "All ready!" called the foreman of the corral force. "Where's Willing?"

Just then a man whom Armstrong had not noticed climbed quickly into the driver's seat. Without waiting to gather up the reins, which were fastened to the brake, he yelled: "Go!" in a voice like the crack of a pistol, and the horses started at a gallop, throwing aside the two men holding them. With a quick motion the driver loosened the brake and grasped the reins. As Armstrong turned to wave a farewell, he caught a fleeting glimpse of a man excitably running after them and shouting: "Whoa! Stop!" But the driver urged the horses all the faster.

"Not much," he said. "I don't stop fer nobody. Let the duffer be on time if he wants to ride with me." A turn in the road and a clump of pines quickly shut their pursuers out of sight, but Armstrong fancied that he still heard them shouting.

Greatly amused at the independence of the man who dared thus defy the manager of the line, by leaving a passenger behind, Armstrong took a good look at the new driver. He was tall, wiry, and muscular; dark, with a stubby black beard, apparently of only a few days' growth. His face had a peculiar pallor, and his eyes were luminous, like a cat's in the dark. His head wobbled queerly from side to side, and the edges of a livid wound, or a deep scar, near the right temple, protruded below the slouched hat that was pulled low over the forehead. Altogether, his appearance was forbidding, even sinister

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and Armstrong decided that his friend of the morning must have been joking when he predicted a pleasant afternoon. The new driver seemed anything but sociable. To the proffer of the flask, refilled at the station, he answered:—

"No, thank you; not to-day."

"Have a cigar, then?"

"Thanks, but I don't care to smoke."

Armstrong lit a cigar and puffed in silence, the driver gave his whole attention to his horses, guiding them with wonderful skill. The road was now taking them through a deep cañon, with a stream rushing down the centre. There were many quick decents and sudden turns, but the driver made them all with the greatest ease, the pace slackening. Armstrong noticed, with a curious thrill of mingled apprehension and pleasurable excitement, that he took every possible chance of an accident yet always escaped. At the curves, he drew his horses in as closely as possible to the overhanging rocks, and sometimes the coach swung for a moment on two wheels, but it always righted itself, and the horses seemed to understand the slightest motion of the guiding hand.

Passing out of the cañon, they came to a stretch of more level country, and Armstrong improved the relatively slower gait by another attempt at conversation.

"How far," he asked, "to the next station?"

"'Bout twenty mile."

"Be there in two hours?"

"Certain; less than that if we hev any luck. Them hosses is good fer fourteen mile an hour, an' the road's down hill most of the way now."

"I suppose you have heard all about the hold-up yesterday?"

"Certain. I wuz there."

"What?"

"I wuz there. Saw the hull shootin' match."

Armstrong thought that the fellow was lying, but he didn't like to say so. He lit another cigar and continued.

"Were you one of the passengers yesterday?"

"No."

"You surely weren't the driver? He got shot."

"No. I wuzn't the driver."

"Nor the express messenger?"

"No."

"Well, then, if you were not the driver, nor the express messenger, nor a passenger, what were you doing there?"

"Jest loafin' round as a spectator."

More puzzled than ever, Armstrong inquired:

"How did you happen to be there?"

"Never you mind, stranger. Don't be too inquirin' 'bout other people's bizness. When I tell you that I wuz there, thet orter settle it."

Armstrong was hurt, not so much at his companions gruffness as at the fact that the genial driver of the morning had so grossly deceived him. Either this was true or else he was singularly unsuccessful in finding the right side of the rough nature with which he was trying to establish an acquaintance. He made one further effort.

"Now see here, Willing," he commenced.

"You're mistaken," the driver interrupted. "My uame ain't Willing."

"The deuce you say? Who are you then?"

"They call me the Wizard of Red Gulch, but my real name is William Murphy," said the driver quietly.

Armstrong sulked back into his seat, and in gloomy silence awaited further developments. These were soon forthcoming. They commenced to wind about the brow of a mountain preparatory to a descent on the other side of a "divide." There was forest on both sides of the road, and now and then they skirted the edges of ravines.

"I'll tell you how I got my name," said the driver still in a quiet monotonous tone. "I kin do things with hosses an' coaches sech ez no other feller ever done. I'll soon show you my greatest act. Jest over the hill here we go down all the way for 'bout a mile. Pretty steep, too. They call it Long Cañon. 'Bout the middle there's a stretch of a quarter of a mile where the bluff on this side is straight down five hundred to a thousand feet. Narrow road. Jest 'bout the middle of this there's a big boulder right on the ragged edge. I turns them hosses loose an' makes it at a gallop. Ev'ry trace on this side an' both wheels hez to graze thet rock 'thout hittin' hard enough to throw us over. See?"

No, Armstrong didn't see, and didn't want to see. He was convinced now that he was travelling with a maniac. But it was too late to interfere. They had entered upon the narrow road indicated, with a sheer wall of granite at their left, and a plunge into unknown depths at their right. Armstrong caught glimpses of the tops of trees far below them, and fancied that he heard the roaring of a torrent at the bottom. He shut his eyes in despair; then opened them again, impelled by a horrible fascination. Yes, there was the boulder just ahead. The brake was jammed down hard but the horses were plunging merrily along, their heads in the air their hoofs flying, quivering with excitement. The coach swayed and lurched, and the man held the reins, his eyes fixed intently on the leaders, leaning away forward in his seat, was calling with explosive emphasis, which seemed to lift the broncos into the air: "Go! Vamos! Vamos! Git out o' here!"

They swept past the boulder. Armstrong saw the traces touch and bound away and heard the hubs of the wheels grate against it. A few moments later the danger was past. The horses had swung around a turn in the road and were trotting quietly upon a space that was nearly level. Armstrong wiped the sweat from his face. A little later they emerged from the cañon and the view widened on either hand. Armstrong breathed more freely.

"I knowed I could do it agin," said the driver quietly "I done it every day fer three year—except once."

"What happened that time?" Armstrong stammered, with a desperate effort at unconcern.

The driver ignored the question.

"Would you mind holdin' the ribbons a minit?" he inquired. "I git off here."

Mechanically Armstrong took the reins. Without an instant's hesitation, the Wizard of Red Gulch stepped lightly from the swiftly-moving coach and waved a farewell to Armstrong, who looked back at him, bewildered. He had expected to see Murphy roll head over heels and stop with a broken neck. But nothing of the kind occurred.

Murphy stood for a moment with his tall figure sharply outlined in the glare of the dusty road-bed, a melancholy smile played upon his cadaverous features. Then he vanished, all in an instant, and Armstrong thought that he must have plunged into the chaparrel by the side of the road. He was uncertain whether he ought to stop. He had never driven a six team in his life, and he hesitated a moment between desire to be rid of the

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maniac and reluctance to assume responsibility. A second later the horses settled the question, for they broke into a gallop again, and Armstrong found himself occupied keeping them in the road. For the first time he fully appreciated the wonderful skill of his recent travelling companion.

Having gained a certain control, Armstrong kept the horses moving along and left the Wizard to his fate. He soon entered a better country, where there were ranches of some pretentions and evidences of prosperity, and was congratulating himself that he must be nearing Red Gulch, when he noticed a dozen horsemen coming swiftly towards him. At sight of the coach they separated and arranged themselves on either side of the road.

When Armstrong came up they pointed rifles at his head and ordered him to halt. He brought the six horses to a stop as quickly as he could. "Throw up your hands;" was the next command. Armstrong lost no time in complying. His captors were roughly clad, uncouth, but ready men of the mountains—not at all the sort to be trifled with. They surrounded the coach, swearing, laughing, cracking frontier jokes.

"Git up thar, Jim, an' hang to them broncos," said a burly fellow, evidently the leader. "Jim," slipped from his horse, handed the bridle to the man next in the line, mounted the box and picked up the reins which Armstrong had dropped.

"Now then, Sandy an' Tom, git up thar, too, an' search him fer weapons."

Two climbed upon the stage. After a hasty examination of Armstrong's clothing, they reported that there were no "shooting irons" upon him.

"The hell you say!" remarked the leader in a puzzled tone.

"Gentlemen," said Armstrong," may I inquire the reason for this outrage?"

"Now don't try to run no bluff on us, young man," was the reply. "We're out after ye, and we've got ye. Were a goin' to take yer inter Red Gulch, where ye'll have a fair trial. Fall in, boys. Go ahead Jim."

Escorted by the riders and closely watched by the men with him on the stage, Armstrong made his entry into Red Gulch an hour after his sudden deposition from the proud position of driver. On the way he gathered little information, every question being met with ridicule or with indifference. He inferred, however, from the little that was said, that he was accused of stealing the horses and the stage, and was supposed to be connected, in some mysterious way, with Joe Carter.

Red Gulch is a straggling mining village. The office of the stage company is flanked on one side by the post office and the general store, and on the other by the Blue Blood saloon. As the stage and its cavalry escort came swinging down the single narrow street of the place thirty or forty men and half grown boys rushed forward and surrounded them. Several were armed with revolvers ostentatiously protruding from pockets and belts. Their air of eager expectancy impressed Armstrong forcibly rather than pleasantly. At a word from Jim, when the stage stopped, he stepped to the ground. The crowd laughed and drew closer. A tall, old man, with a long, gray beard, a hooked nose, and an eye like a hawk's, waved them aside.

"Jedge," said the leader of the capturing party, "here's your man. We told ye thet we'd bring him in, dead or alive. He's a queer cuss. Didn't show a bit of fight. Cons'quently he's here to speak for himself. We've searched him. We didn't find nothin' in the way of tools—no rifle, no revolver, not even a knife. He don't look like one of Carter's gang. But we'll turn him over to you fellers, an' you can try him. We've done our part. Now you do yourn. In my opinion, though, he ain't worth the price of a rope to hang him with."

With a look of infinite disgust and a wave of the hand which signified that he was done with the business, Armstrong's captor delivered him into the custody of the law, as represented by Judge Billings, of Red Gulch. Something in Armstrong's appearance seemed to strike the judge as irresistibly comical, and he joined in the laughter of the crowd as he laid a sinewy hand, at the end of a long, lean arm, lightly upon Armstrong's shoulder.

"So you're the bold, bad man," he said, "thet runs off with a stage an' six hosses, be you?"

"I don't understand you, sir. There must be some mistake," Armstrong replied with dignity, and shaking off the detaining arm.

"Wa'al, they telephoned from Beaverville to look out fer a light haired, doodish duffer who hed run off with the coach, an' here you be, answerin' the description all right."

"Did they also telephone from Beaverville that they had sent the stage out with a lunatic for a driver?" Armstrong demanded angrily.

"No—o. They didn't say that. But mebbe thet's right. Boys, what d'ye say?"

"Looks like thet wuz 'bout right," said one.

"Let's try him for hoss stealin', anyway," said another.

"Ask him where his friend, Carter is," suggested a third.

"Gentlemen," said Armstrong, "you are evidently labouring under a misapprehension. If you will devote a moment's reflection to this subject, you will at once see that I could have no possible use for a coach and six horses. I have not been guilty of larceny, as you appear to surmise. I simply took the reins from the hands of a crazy driver, who deserted me several miles back, and I have brought the property of the Beaverville, Red Gulch and Gold Run Stage Company to the place where it belongs. It is I who have suffered, not you or the company. I have been frightened out of my wits this afternoon, and if you will give me your attention for a few minutes, I will prove to you that your suspicions in regard to me are entirely unfounded."

Thereupon, Armstrong related the story of his ride. When he described the Wizard and his reckless driving, the crowd laughed uproariously. They tossed their hats in the air and yelled like madmen. Armstrong became convinced that most of them were drunk. No one could tell what freak would seize them next. He was frightened. His voice faltered; his knees shook; but he managed to carry his narrative to the end, realising, as he told how the Wizard had dropped off from the stage and vanished—he did not know whither—that his auditors had a reasonable foundation for their mirthful incredulity.

"You're a good one," Judge Billings remarked, when Armstrong had finished. "Well, boys," he continued, "come along an' let's talk it over. We'll settle this thing right now."

The crowd drew a little apart, and, left alone, Armstrong took a seat on the steps of the shanty that served for a stage office. He caught snatches of the comments passed upon him during the animated discussion which followed. They were such as these:

"Slickest liar ever been in these parts."

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While this proceeding was in progress, six fresh horses had been attached to the stage, and the new driver, a ruddy, cheerful individual, was drawing the reins over them for another start. Armstrong did not stir. The driver called "All aboard!"

Judge Billing came back to Armstrong.

"The boys," he said, "hez found ye guilty ez charged, but with extenooatin' circumstances. I hopes you'll excuse th' informality of the proceedin's. I'm a jestice of the peace, but in these parts the wheels of jestice is mostly greased by public opinion. Some of our influential citizens air out after Carter. Mebbe that's jest eez well fer you. If the boys thet's here don't object I kin let ye go. Some of them thinks you're in partners with Carter, but they ain't proved it. We've decided to turn you loose if you'll stan' treat all round."

Without stopping to discuss the equity of this decision Armstrong willingly acquiesced. Everybody filed into the Blue Blood saloon, and Armstrong paid for drinks for all. Then he climbed slowly to a seat beside the new driver, nd they started amid cheers and rattling farewell of revolver shots.

Armstrong and the new driver rode for ten minutes in silence. Then the driver said: "Thet wuz a dead cold bluff of yourn pardner. But it worked all right jest the same. You see the Wizard hez been dead this two weeks—two weeks ago to-day he wuz killed. He use to hev the trick you tell of—skinned past thet boulder every day for ten years. Skeered more'n a hundred wimmin passingers inter fits. Comp'ny discharged him half-a-dozen times, but took him on ag'in, fer he wuz all right 'cept fer thet one thing. But two weeks ago to-day he wuz a leetle full, I reckon. He druv too close to the boulder an' plunked right inter it. Threw him off'n the the seat an' inter the Gulch. Killed him dead."

"Nevertheless," said Armstrong quietly, "I rode with him to-day."

"The boys wuz hot 'bout your stealin' this here outfit afore you come up. Thought it mebbe you wuz mixed up with Carter in some way. Consid'ble talk of lynchin' ye. But you see, you didn't do no harm. Hosses blowed a leetle, but thet don't count. I reckon they decided that you wuz crazy. Mountain air makes people crazy sometimes. No. You can't come it over me. I see Murphy arter he was picked up. His head wuz smashed an' his neck wuz broke. He wuz dead ez Cap'n Kidd. We planted him in Beaverville.

"Thanks; I don't c re if I do. Here's to your good health. Thet's good stuff, too. Will I hev a cigar? Cert. You ain't a-ridin' with no fool this trip, mister. Ain't thet lovely sunset, though? See how it flames along the mountains?"

In course of time Armstrong completed his tour and returned to Montreal, but for weeks afterwards, in his dreams he took wild drives down Long Cañon, in company with the phantom Wizard of Red Gulch.

Arthur Pigott.

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BOOK III.—CONCERNING THE RULE OF KING OLERON.

CHAPTER VII.

How the Ledge was turned into a fort: how it was defended: how three of the besieged got out: and how they came across the chief sorcerer to the island of Erma.

Though the invaders were doubtless anxious enough to meet the whole Erman force massed together, the invaded steadfastly refused to risk annihilation in another pitched battle. They retreated before every strong advance, and only hazarded fighting that was little more than skirmish.

The island was large, and furrowed with valleys running out of the bare rocks of the central peak. If the army of Daji straggled much, many members of it would certainly be cut off by those who knew the ground, and could plant good ambushes; and besides, even by straggling, it could not have covered so large an area.

Of course the Ermans had been obliged to desert houses and other possessions of that kind. But come to think of it, the sacrifice was not a very large one. The Dajians might burn huts and furniture certainly. But new huts could be run up in a day or so, as good or better than the old; and when one's household goods consist of one net hammock per head, and a few calabashes, and one's wealth of a dozen or so yards of *tappa* cloth, the materials for producing which all grow close at hand, well, a man is not in reality much the poorer for the loss of such at all. For no one could destroy the forests, and no one could catch all the birds in the air, or dredge all the fish from the sea.

So the Dajians ate, drank, and used what they wanted, destroyed what they could of the balance, and had perforce to leave the remainder—the larger part—untouched. And between whiles they amused themselves with hunting Ermans, without much success or excitement, except sometimes when they found the tables reversed, and got hunted in their turn.

This desultory warfare lasted for well nigh a month without any signs of its coming to a conclusion. The natives became habituated to their life in the woods after a couple of day's experience—indeed the change was a trifling one to them—and preferred to remain as they were, to making any desperate attempt to regain possession of the island again.

But King Oleron felt deeply the disgrace of having a foreign foe quartered in his land, and was continually inciting his subjects to harass the invader by every means in their power.

In one of their sorties, if one may so call them, from a snug eric amongst the mountains, our three Europeans had a very near shave of being taken prisoners. They had marched down Maantee's valley one night with a company of natives, intending to attack a body of Dajians, who had encamped on the coast. But as these inconsiderate savages had shifted their quarters, without giving due notice of the fact, the surprise came from the wrong side. The sortie party found themselves in a tight place, for the Dajians were on them both front and rear; and at first it looked as if the Ermans and their white allies were going to be massacred to a man. But principally by the herculean efforts of this latter trio, they cut their way through, and the survivors of them made for the Ledge with as much dignity as they could muster. I'm afraid it was more of a run than a retreat; but the enemy was at least four to one, which forms some excuse. However, once on the Ledge, the top of the path leading thereto was easy to defend, as Sneyd and O'Neill taught conclusively to the vanguard of the pursuers; and so the survivors of these fell back and told their comrades, who contented themselves with posting a strong guard at the foot of the ascent.

"The Ledge makes a very decent fort, as Sandy said it would," Sneyd remarked. "It's easy enough to defend it against escalade. The only question is how far we are provisioned against a siege."

"There's just twenty-two mouths of us, all told," said O'Neill, "an' Mytto reports that three of 'em are in a bad way av Dochter Sandy's any judge. The crops is all stole or spoiled, for these ugly haythens trampled down what they couldn't ate or carry off; but we shall find some taro left by huntin' for it, an' there's bananas they couldn't reach, an' the spring, which of course they couldn't stop. I don't think there's much fear on the score of grub. It'll last us a week wid care, an' we should conthrive some manes of givin' 'em leg bail before that time's out."

House and all fixtures and improvements were burnt or otherwise destroyed, but this was a minor detail. They could be replaced when the time came, very easily, and in the meanwhile they were but little missed. The proprietors of the Ledge paid but small heed to the havoc around them. They were too busily engaged in making themselves obnoxious to the new neighbours who had taken up quarters down below. O'Neill sighed for artillery. With half a dozen 18-pounders he could surprise the beseigers not a little. Such engines of warfare were of course unattainable; but Sneyd, casting back his memory over old reading recalled the form of one or two missile-throwing implements in use before the invention of gunpowder. Having plenty of strength and material at hand, he con-

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They started practice with these infernal machines.

structed three pretty powerful ballistas on the edge of the platform. The besiegers saw the erections being set up, and thought, so Mytto said, that they were gods, and consequently stared at them fixedly. Each was trained as accurately as inexperience would allow of, and loaded with a great lump of rock. The levers were drawn down by their windlasses, and released. The three projectiles sung through the air, and one of them fell amongst a knot of the spectators, knocking several over, and killing four outright.

O'Neill, to whose lucky marksmanship this successful shot had been due, rubbed his hands delightedly. "Begob," he cried, "we'll pick 'em off pace-male." But the Dajians were not such fools as to allow this. They had never seen a ballista before, or heard of one, but the weapon's power was obvious, and they withdrew hurriedly. A second discharge, trained to a higher elevation, sent them to a still more respectful distance. But, at a quarter of a mile away, they were out of range, despite the lofty position the shot was hurled from.

So to prevent time falling heavily on their hands, the besieged added to their artillery four great cross-bows. The bows were stout trees, the strings thick rope. They were drawn by rude winches made for the purpose, and fired a bolt—or to be more explicit, a bamboo stake—four feet long, fire-hardened at the pointed end, and feathered at the other extremity with flat wooden vanes. They started practice with these infernal machines after dark, and, by aiming at the watch-fires, contrived to split some half-dozen unfortunates before the others understood where this new pest arrived from, and took themselves even farther away still. In fact, when morning lighted the scene, the besiegers were seen to have deserted even the hill opposite the Ledge, and were encamped in two bodies, one up and one down the valley, and each at least half a mile in crow line from the obnoxious fort.

A larger and stronger cross-bow was made, but it wouldn't throw the distance. The Dajians could evidently be annoyed with missiles no longer. O'Neill took this as very mean on their part. But Sneyd said, "Small blame to them for refusing to stand up and be shied at if they can't hit back."

"But," grumbled the Irishman, "the dirty bastes are just goin' to thry and starve us out."

"Of course they're going to try it," replied Sneyd.

"And they'll do that same av we don't interfere to help ourselves. There's ownly two things to prevent it that I can see. Either it must rain grub, or else his honour, the King, must collect his troops, an' raise the siege."

"Either of which," Sneyd added, "is equally likely."

"It's no use asking for terms," said O'Neill. "We must just hould out till our bellies are empty, an' then make a bolt for it under cover of the darkness. Some of us may slip through av they hit on a soft place in the line of pickets, an' the rest must just die as hard as they can —fightin'."

"It's no use waiting till we're weak from want of food," said Sneyd. "I move that if to-night is decently dark, we make a dash for it without further loss of time."

There was silence for a minute or so, which Sandy broke by saying:

"Why shouldn't we try and get up the cliff at the back?"

There was no verbal answer to his suggestion, but, reading from their faces what each thought, he went on:

"I don't think it's impossible. One could scale this flat, vertical rock with a long bamboo ladder, and then, as far as one can judge from below, there are crannies and fissures to give foothold right away to the very top. We might draw off the whole force that way, evacuate the fort this very night, and none of the Dajians be a bit the wiser till morning. But what do you say, Mytto?"

Mytto shook his head most decisively. "Can't be done," he said. "'Out of sunshine into oven,' as King Oleron would say. Devil lives up there, and he's worse than all the Dajians."

Sneyd, who thought the plan distinctly feasible, asked angrily, "What nonsense is this?" But Mytto, beyond reiterating that the cliff was a favourite and much-used residence of the original fiend himself, and stating his unalterable determination not to scale it, vouchsafed no further explanation. And his fellow-countrymen were equally unsatisfactory.

At first the three Europeans thought they were in honour bound to stay and share the other defenders' inevitable fate. Deserting one's comrades to save one's own skin always seems cowardly, even though the said comrades have refused, through sheer funk, to avail themselves of a simple

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avenue of escape. But then it dawned upon them that if they could get out, they might have sufficient influence to gather a force that could raise the siege; and at any rate they could reprovision the garrison from above under cover of darkness. For either of these purposes it was necessary for the whole three of them to go. But their absence would make no difference to the defence. The point where the path from below debouched on to the little plateau had been strengthened artificially during the siege, and in its then state two men could hold it easily against an army. An attack could only be made in single file, and as each man appeared he would most certainly be brained. And beside the fact that their muscles were superfluous, their appetites were distinctly a burden.

So they set about making the wherewithal to scale the vertical cliff at the back of the Ledge.

A regular ladder of the requisite length proved impracticable, principally because there was not enough stuff to make it easily procurable. So they lashed single poles together, for which purpose there was a sufficiency of long stout bamboos, and notched them at intervals. Nearly two hundred feet were required, and to raise this in one piece was quite out of the question. However, by dint of great care and contrivance, one-third was reared up on end, and rested against the cliff.

O'Neill climbed cautiously to the top, hauled up another section after him, hoisted it into position, and lashed it there. Then instead of letting down his rope for the next piece, he came to the ground in person.

"Get me some short sharpened lengths," said he. "There's heaps of crannies to stick 'em in, an' av the long po'e gets a side lashing every here and there, it's less likely to let one go by the run than it is at pre-ent."

The work went on slowly, now one, now another of the trio taking his turn, but at last the top section reached a narrow ledge, whence the final ascent seemed practicable, if not easy.

The task had taken many hours, for in the darkness, which was very intense, one had to exercise great caution; and by the time the three Europeans had got on to the solid footing above, they judged that dawn could not be far off. So they started off on the upward climb without a minute's delay. The rocks were steep, bare, and greasy with dew. In many cases one had to be hoisted up by the other two, who in turn were dragged on to the higher level. Once they were obliged to build a little cairn of stones, collected with great trouble, before even this means of scaling one of the higher steps was possible. They had each several narrow escapes of slipping, and a fall would only finish in the valley below. And several times when foiled in one direction, they had to turn back, and try another way. But thanks to having hard tireless muscles, heads that no dizzy height would turn, and seamen's knack of climbing, they had got over the worst by the time dawn began to cast its grey shadow over the eastern waters, and had scrambled into cover behind some craggy rocks before the sun had sprung up to commence his daily round.

"It's meself that's been up some quare places," said the Irishman, wiping the perspiration from his face with the back of a hard freckled hand, "but for all-round bastleness, this about whips the lot of 'em. An' how we're goin' to get down again's more than I can tell. It's about lucky Mytto an' the other chaps didn't thry to come wid us, or it's broken necks they'd had be the toime they got to the top. Begob, I wish they could ha' come though. How powerful sorry for themselves them Daji bhoys would ha' been to find thay were kaping guard over a nest that had neither egg, chick, nor old bird in it."

"There's one thing we're overlooked," said Sandy. "That bamboo pole can't very well avoid being seen."

"That's awkward," remarked Sneyd. "If we come back here to-night with supplies, we may find a party of these beggers ready to cut us off."

"Then," said Sandy, "the sooner we find our own people, and persuade a gang of them to make a night attack on the besiegers, the better. We shall only have half to deal with, as they are in two bodies, and if Mytto is sharp—which, to give him is due, he generally is—he will rush out and join us with his men at the first attack."

"Sandy," said the ex-cornet, "you are a great general. Come, let's be moving without further loss of time. We've had quite long enough rest to get our winds back again."

They crossed the ridge and, sharp *arrête* of bare stone, and began cautiously descending the other side. The climbing was very hard. All their wits were required to find the safest path. Once down the rocky steep, they would reach a gently sloping plateau of turf, and then might examine the prospect below at their leisure. O'Neill was the first in the line of descent. The others were coming cautiously along a few yards behind him. The Irishman reached the easy ground, halted, and held up his hand for silence. Sneyd and Sandy Carmichael stopped dead. O'Neill listened for a minute or so, and then beckoned for them to join him. They did so, carefully, being mindful to make no noise.

"There was somebody talking just round that rock," he whispered.

The three unslung their clubs and listened. For fully ten minutes not a sound broke the silence. Then a hard grating voice made a remark, and another, a feebler one, replied.

"That's Ebry who spoke first," said the Irishman. "I'd know it in any crowd. I'd know it if I heard it in Sackville

O'Neill climbed cautiously to the top.

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Street, Dhublin." With which sagacious remark he pressed forward, followed by his companions, and the three of them found themselves in the presence of the chief sorcerer of the island of Erma.

CHAPTER VIII.

How the three Europeans refreshed themselves: how the chief sorcerer turned traitor: and how Sneyd and O Neill got a respite from the oven just in the nick of time.

To say that the chief sorcerer showed surprise at the meeting, is to put the case mildly. He jumped up from the bed of leaves on which he had been sitting, ran backwards till his shoulders banged against the rock, and crouched there with both hands up before his face as though to ward off an expected blow. He might have mistaken his unexpected visitors for Dajians; but that does not disguise the fact that he made a most pitiable exhibition of cowardice.

"All right, Ebry," laughed Sneyd, "sorry for scaring you, but we've not come with murderous intent. Your time hasn't arrived yet. Who is that you were talking to? Oh, I see, the plump little assistant. Hurt, too, poor beggar. Hullo! why, there's a regular cave behind here. Keep house in this outlandish spot, do you? Well, that explains what Mytto said about the mountain being the abode of the devil. But, I say, my good Ebry, you might be a little more hospitable. We're simply famishing. Just escaped from the Philistines over the other side. Spin you the yarn afterwards. But give us some grub first, or we shall break through our usual rule, and follow the custom of the neighbourhood, by turning cannibals and eating you."

The chief sorcerer, with his uncomely visage screwed into a vinegary and obviously forced smile, set before the hungry fugitives a large calabash full of well-seasoned *poce*, and then when that had vanished before their desperate inroads, he produced three great pines, and a palm basket full of custard apples, with which vegetarian meal they perforce had to satisfy themselves, as there was no meat forthcoming.

During the meal, Ebry related incidents of his own prowess, showed an incised wound at the back of his scalp, and said that but for him the Ermans would have been swept into the sea long ago. Which statement, as the chief sorcerer had not been in evidence in any of the engagements they had fought in, the Europeans had to receive on trust; though taking into account that the scalp wound was evidently dealt from behind, and remembering what a timid front he had shown on the enemy's arrival, they swallowed these deeds of derring do with many grains of salt.

There was no doubt, however, that the plump assistant sorcerer was badly hurt, and after dressing the head of his superior officer, Sandy pulled off the rude bandage from the little fellow's ribs, and showed a ghastly wound about the middle of the right side. He examined it carefully, but no one could tell the diagnosis from his face. His features were absolutely expressionless. Then he washed the gash, put on fresh compressers, and binding them firmly in place, went across to the other side of the cave, and joined his companions.

"Well?" said Sneyd in English. "How is he?"

"Desperately bad. He says the spear 'bit deep,' and it must have done."

"Will he pull through?"

"I can't say. But we must hope for the best."

"A regular doctor's reply. That means, I suppose, that your patient is going to die"

Producing a coil of grass rope his captors lashed him to a pole of bamboo.

"He'll have a small chance if he's left to Ebry's tender mercies. That blear-eyed ruffian has nearly killed him as it is."

"I wonder if we couldn't get some of the women down to nurse him?" mused O'Neill. "This place is snug enough. There'd be small chance o' them Dajians beatin' 'em up here."

"Let's ask the landlord," suggested Sneyd. "I say, Ebry, your friend here won't have much of a chance unless he's better looked after. Can't you find some woman or other to come and take care of him? I'm sure there must be scores sleeping out every night under the stars who would be glad of quarters here."

The chief sorcerer's face showed plain distaste for the proposal. But he did not refuse to entertain it. He temporised, and said he would consider the matter, and then he asked what were the white men's plans for the immediate future.

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"Well," said Sneyd, "notwithstanding the demands of your pressing hospitality, we do not propose inflicting ourselves upon you for long. You see, Mytto and the other men, who are holding the Ledge, demand our first attention. Either we must collect a band of men strong enough to make the Dajians raise the siege for a sufficiently long time to allow the defenders to get out, or we must contrive to smuggle in provisions."

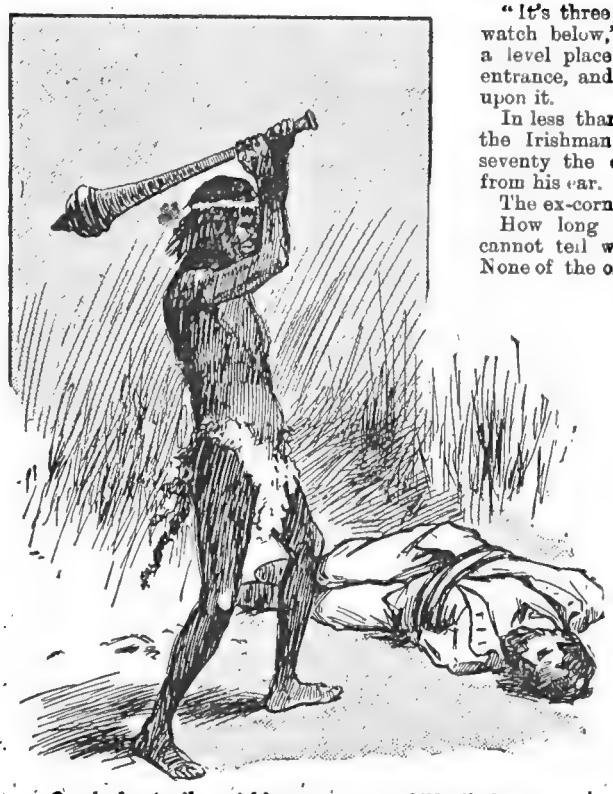
"Could they hold out if they had food?" inquired Ebry.

"Well victualled, they would defend the place till they died of old age."

"Then," exclaimed the chief sorcerer, "this is what must be done. I will go now and command that a force be raised. None dare refuse Ebry's command. In four hours I shall be back here. As soon as darkness falls, you shall return with what food you can carry, and I will come with you, bearing more. On the second night from now, a force of Ermans will surprise the men of Daji who hold the valley. We shall be on the look-out, and when the shouts of war reach us, we will sally forth and join the conflict."

"Bravo, Ebry!" exclaimed O'Neill, hitting the chief sorcerer encouragingly on the back. "You've more pluck in yez than a dead mouse has."

The sorcerer grinned constrainedly at the compliment, and said he would set out on his errand without further delay. Sneyd proposed accompanying him, but the man begged to go alone. There were Dajians about everywhere, he said, and Sneyd would most certainly be seen by them. He, himself, would not be noticed. He was accustomed to slipping through undergrowth like a snake.



One had actually got his weapon over O'Neill's head.

This last remark was very true, and the three Europeans resolved to stay where they were, take a few hours much needed sleep so as to be thoroughly recruited for their arduous climb after dark.

"I shall be back long before it is time for us to start over the hill," said Ebry, as he took himself off, "and I will show you then where we can gather the supplies. The place is close at hand." And with that he took himself off.

"Before you lie down," said Sandy, who was kneeling beside the wounded man, moistening his bandage, "I wish you'd give me a lift with this poor fellow. He's very feverish, and I think he'd be more comfortable further in the cave, where it's cooler."

The others readily complied, and raising the assistant conjuror as carefully and gently as they were able, they carried him round a couple of angles, and deposited him on a couch of leaves in a cool, gloomy recess.

"Hullo," exclaimed Sneyd, looking round him, "we are in that old scamp's laboratory, or whatever he chooses to call it. Look, here's all his conjuring tackle littered about. I say, Sandy, as you've starting dabbling in magic, you'd better overhaul this stuff when you've a little time, and try and find out how that clever snake trick was done. You might be able to step into Ebry's shoes some day when he retires on a competency, and subsides into private life."

"Perhaps I will, if the opportunity occurs," replied Sandy, with one of his rarely indulged-in smiles. "But not now. I'm far too sleepy at present. In fact, I should think none of us will be sorry to turn in for an hour or so."

"It's three weeks since I had a regular watch below," yawned O'Neill, looking for a level place on the cave floor near the entrance, and then settling himself down upon it.

In less than thirty seconds Sneyd heard the Irishman snoring, and in less than seventy the discordant noise had faded from his ear.

The ex-cornet was fast asleep himself.

How long they slept, I am afraid I cannot tell with any degree of accuracy. None of the old records mention the time; and, as they ignore it, I suppose they themselves are ignorant on the point also. Sneyd said that he had just closed his eyes, when O'Neill's yell awoke him; but then that evidence is eminently untrustworthy. A good many of us are ready to declare that we haven't been in bed a minute, when some heartless person says it's 8.30 a.m., and quite time to get up. However, this does not particularly matter, as the method of their awakening is clearly told. The ex-cornet was roused by the sound of a terrific yell, opened his eyes, and attempted to rise at the same time. Instantly twenty hands seized him, and bore him back again. He tried to struggle, but found he couldn't move a limb; and ten savage faces above him glowed with satisfaction. He had spoken somewhat scoffingly of the Philistines overnight. The Philistines were upon him with a vengeance now.

Producing a coil of grass rope, his captors lashed him to a pole of bamboo, and then two of them, raising the ends on their shoulders, he was carried into the open. He turned his head, and saw O'Neill in similar plight beside him.

"Where's Sandy?" he asked.

"Haven't seen him," replied the Irishman, "or heard him."

"How did these fellows come?"

"That cursed informer Ebry brought 'em. He's just behind yez now. They grabbed me when I was asleep. I shouted to wake you, an' hit out. But it was no use. I did damage the ugliness of a few of 'em, but there was too many to give a bhoy a dacent chance."

"Are you hurt?"

"No, me skin's sound enough, praise be, though that's not much, when one's trussed up like this. It will be small mercy we've got to expect; but begob, av they'd allow me five minutes conversation wid that thraitor Ebry, an' one fist cast adrift, it's meself that 'd go along wid 'em, like a lamb to the meat-shop."

Sneyd added a sentence or two, in which his opinion of the chief sorcerer was put in strongish phrase, and then asked his companion in misfortune what could have become of Sandy.

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"It's meself that's been wondering," replied the Irishman. "I expected to find him being jumped upon beside me. But he wasn't there. The Dajians were surprised too at not grabbing him, and so was Ebry, for he went away back into the cave and evidently examined every cranny carefully. It can't be that he got wind of their coming, and made a bolt for it, for, of course, he'd have warned us too. So where has he got to, I can't for the life of me imagine. However, the odds are he's got clear away somewhere, and if he has, you may lay your teeth on it he'll bear a hand to get us out of this mess, av that same's possible. There's no leveller head than Sandy Carmichael's on Erma this minute."

The Dajians bore their prisoners along with but scant ceremony. Every time bearers were changed—and this happened pretty frequently—bump! went the helpless bodies on to the ground; so that by the time they were finally shot down in the middle of their captors' encampment, both were tolerably bruised. But such minor details as bumps and abrasures, are little thought of by men who expect within the hour to be killed and grilling in an oven. Their minds were working at full strain to find a means of escape; but as a preliminary to every plan, they must first have use of arms and legs; and wriggle and strain how they would, nothing would come adrift. The lashings had been passed by no 'prentice hand, and every now and then a savage would catch sight of their strivings, and grin with cheerful derision, and recommend them to take matters stoically. And so after making the fetters cut deeply into their flesh, in at least a dozen places, they desisted from the useless effort.

Still it was rather maddening work to lie still, and see those human demons dig a couple of neat holes in the earth with bamboo spades; to watch them line the sides of the cavities with stones; to note bearers bringing in armfuls of wood; to see the fuel placed carefully into position and lighted; and to be fully aware all the time, to what end these deliberate proceedings tended. I say it would be hard for any one to be cool and phlegmatic under such trying circumstances; and I fully own that both Sneyd and O'Neill would have gone pale if their skins had not been too sunburnt to admit of such a change, and that they actually were so upset, that the cold perspiration of pure funk literally gushed from them in streams.

But at the very last moment when the blazing wood was being taken out of the earth ovens, when the stones within were dully red; when the feasters were beginning to stroll up;—at the last moment, I say, Providence intervened. Another ten seconds and the intervention would have been too late. Two brawny savages had come up, club in hand, to prepare the roast for the oven—to consummate the sacrifice. One had actually got his weapon raised over O'Neill's fiery head, when a shout from the outskirts of the camp made him stay his hand.

A messenger was running up as fast as legs would carry him. "We go back," he panted, "to Daji. There has been a battle, and our men ran. They are running even now. The Ermans have killed many, and are chasing the others into the sea. Fly whilst there is still time."

The two butchers hesitated for a moment.

"Take the prisoners," said the messenger. "They will be a comfort for us when we reach Daji."

(To be continued.)

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There are full particulars in *Home Notes*.

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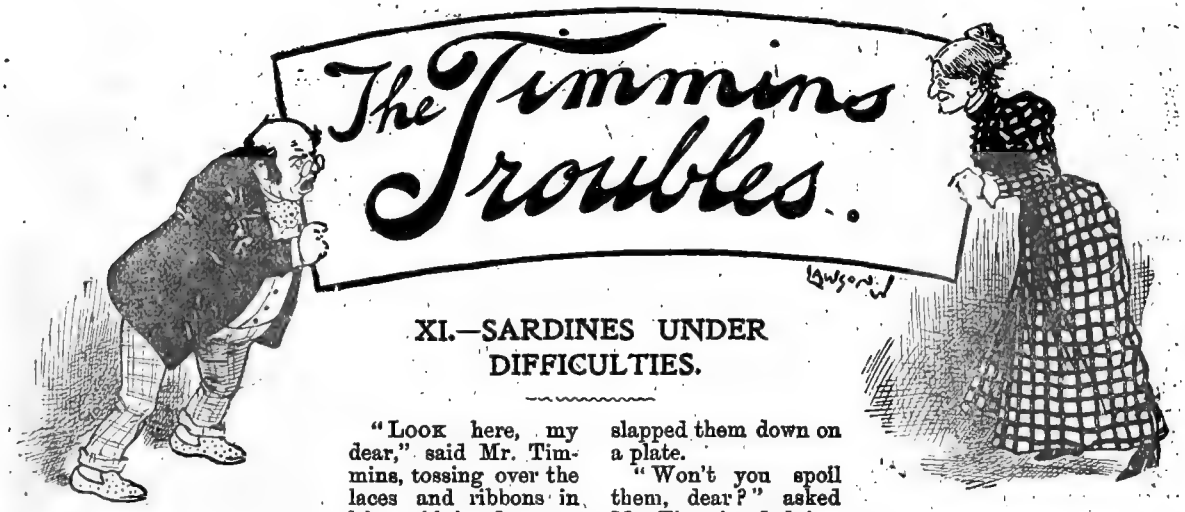

XI.—SARDINES UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

"Look here, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, tossing over the laces and ribbons in his wife's drawer, "what's become of the can-opener? I don't see it anywhere."

"What do you want it for?" asked Mrs. Timmins, fluttering up to protect her trinkets, and trying to gain a little time.

"I want to open some sardines with it," retorted Mr. Timmins, abandoning the drawer and hunting through the work-basket. "D'yer think I want to comb my hair or write a letter with it? Well, I don't. I want some sardines. What have you done with it?"

"You might take your big knife," recommended Mrs. Timmins. "The large blade is just the thing for that."

Mr. Timmins seized the knife and bored away at one corner of the box, while his wife looked on with considerable distress.

"Hadn't you better put a paper under the box? You'll get the oil all over the tablecloth," suggested Mrs. Timmins.

"No, I won't either," said Mr. Timmins, as the knife plunged through and the oil spattered. "Serve you right if it did," he continued, ploughing away at the tin, while the oil flew in all directions. "It would teach you to put the can opener where you could find it. What kind of housekeeping do you call this, anyhow?" he yelled, as the blade slipped out and closed upon his fingers.

"Did you hurt yourself, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins anxiously.

"No, I didn't hurt myself," shrieked Mr. Timmins; "the knife only struck the bone. Give me some ether!" he howled. "Fetch me some chloroform! D'you s'pose I'm going to saw at this box any more without an anæsthetic? Have you got an idea I'm going to chip off a couple of dozen fingers without something to deaden the pain? Where's the laughing gas? Give me some laughing gas while I extract these fish."

And Mr. Timmins pranced round the room, and then jabbed the knife into the box again, and ripped away as though he was run by steam.

"No use to hide away from me!" he yelled, hacking at the box with all his might. "I know you're in there, and there can't be any sardine that ever was built able to get away from me. Come out, I tell ye!" And he seized a fish by the tail and slung it across the room. "You're transacting business with Timmins now!" And he clawed out a handful of mashed sardines and slapped them down on a plate.

"Won't you spoil them, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins, dodging the flying heads and tails. "They won't be very good if you open them that way."

"Oh, won't they?" howled Mr. Timmins. "P'raps you've got an idea I ought to climb under them and lift 'em out. Maybe you want me to get into that box with a boat and take 'em out with a casting net. Well, I won't. Give me the tongs, I want that fish at the bottom. Where's the tongs? Gone to get married to the tin opener, haven't they?" and Mr. Timmins grabbed another fish and flung it into the grate.

"Be patient, my dear," said Mrs. Timmins soothingly; "make the opening a little wider, and they'll come out."

"Patient!" shouted Mr. Timmins. "P'raps you want me to sing Dr. Watt's hymns to 'em. Come out of that!" and with a wrench Mr. Timmins hauled off the top and disclosed the mangled remains of his enemies. "Now give me a lemon; quick now."

"Upon my word, my dear, I don't believe there's a lemon in the house," stammered Mrs. Timmins. "I had one——"

"Oh, you had one," exclaimed Mr. Timmins, "only you're just out. You only need an awning and a family on the top floor to be a grocery shop! D'ye suppose I'm going to eat these sardines raw? Think I'm going to swallow these fish alive? Gimme something to put with 'em will ye?"

"What would you like, my dear?" queries Mrs. Timmins.

"Ink! Fetch me some ink! Can't ye find some laudanum somewhere?" and Mr. Timmins projected himself into the closet and pranced out with a bottle of arnica. "There," he growled, as he dashed the contents over the sardines, "there's your fish all ready for you," and Mr. Timmins flopped into his easy chair and picked up the paper.

"Don't you want some sardines?" asked Mrs. Timmins after a long pause.

"No, I don't," growled Mr. Timmins.

"But this is a fresh box," said Mrs. Timmins, displaying the sardines in neat layers.

"How'd you get it open?" demanded Mr. Timmins.

"With the tin-opener," replied his wife. "I found it in your tool-box, where you put it to sharpen it."

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER LV.

MOSTLY MATRIMONIAL.

"IRENE!"

"Yes, dear."

"What does it mean when a spider runs across the window?"

"Oh, where is he? Are you sure he is running straight across? For goodness' sake don't blow at him."

Irene Vyne came quickly from the comfortable chair in which she had been enjoying "a good read"—the first novel from Mudie's for over six months—and stood by Ethel's side to see the tiny insect, so unusual a visitor in a West-end drawing-room, rapidly scudding across the broad window-pane. He deviated neither to right nor left but travelled off towards the frame as though a nice juicy fly were well within sight and safely caught in his web.

Irene heaved a sigh of deep satisfaction.

Irene Vyne came quickly from the chair.

"Really," she cried, "a somewhat close acquaintanceship with Tommy Atkins has made me superstitious, and I am *so* glad that this has happened."

"Well?" said Ethel. "Don't be silly, but tell me at once. I saw him first."

"It portends," said Irene, with mock seriousness, "a long journey for a dear friend, a very long journey in your case, and a shorter one in mine, and that nothing on earth will stop either from coming straight here."

Ethel looked sadly and wistfully at her friend as she heard the explanation of the spider's transit over the glass. "It may be true enough for you, dear," she said, with a slight catch in her voice, "as Teddy is within ten hours of London, but Frank is on the staff in Russia, and the "TIMES" says we will be compelled to keep an army of occupation there quite a long time, until the political settlement of the country is completed. Poor little spider! He meant well, I am sure."

They smiled at the conceit, but they both started when they heard the doors of a hansom slammed open in front of the house, followed by a vigorous pull at the bell.

"Now, who on earth can be calling at this time of the day?" cried Irene, for it was past six o'clock.

Ethel did not answer. She had suddenly become greatly agitated, for no assignable reason. Unable to control her emotion she walked to the door of the drawing-room in order to escape from the commonplaces of some casual acquaintance who might be putting in an appearance. When she opened the door she was confronted by a footman and an officer in the undress uniform of the Royal Navy.

In an instant the latter personage sprang forward and caught her in his arms, whilst the footman discreetly closed the door, and thus explained the case to Buttons in the hall: "'E said as 'is nyme was Commander Rodney, but 'e didn't give me chawnce to say a word. They seemed to know 'im all right hupstairs, all the syme."

Rodney did not at first perceive that Irene was in the room. Her eyes had filled with tears at the knowledge that her friend's happiness was now complete, for this was the first meeting of the lovers since that memorable night at the Paris Embassy when Frank had been compelled to forego his waltz, and could not even wait to say "Good-bye."

She discreetly gazed at the window, trying to find that thrice blessed spider again, and she only turned in response to Rodney's cordial greeting.

"I have been sent home overland with dispatches," he explained. "I was obliged to go straight to the Admiralty and War Office, and came on here at the earliest moment without even waiting to change my clothes. But surely you knew I was coming?" he continued, turning to Ethel.

"Not until I opened the door, and you—how could you be so ridiculous before the footman?" and she blushed so prettily that Frank nearly became ridiculous again.

"But I wired to you from Vienna, thirty hours ago."

"I never got it."

They were speculating upon the probable cause of the mysterious loss of the telegram when a knock at the door elicited a "Come in" from Irene.

The door opened gently, there was a discreet cough, and the footman entered, his action causing the three occupants of the room to laugh heartily. He was far too well

trained a servant to even smile. He solemnly approached Irene and said:

"There's a telegram, milady, which nobody knows 'oo it's for, and will you please to open it, milady."

The buff envelope was addressed to "Ethel, Grosvenor Square, London," and the same address appeared in type-written characters within. It was undoubtedly Rodney's message, for which the Post-office officials could find no lucid explanation until an unusually smart postman remembered that there was a Miss Ethel Harington staying at Lord Vyne's residence in the square.

Frank vowed that he wrote the full name and number of the house, but no one believed him, and, if anything, his sweetheart thought more of the error than of its possible explanation. His thoughts must surely have been very full of her if he believed that the Austrian telegraph operator at Vienna would be sufficiently enlightened by this vague description.

When the precious telegram had been safely stowed away in Ethel's purse, Frank said: "By-the-way, where is your brother?"

"He's in Paris, and Irene hasn't had a letter from him for two days."

"Well, this is the second day," grudgingly admitted Irene, "and I won't find him guilty until after to-night's post."

They were so busily engaged in talking that none of them heard the advent of another new arrival, nor, in the growing dusk did they notice the door open.

This time the footman was prepared for eventualities.

The moment he turned the handle he exclaimed quite pompously, "Major Harington." Irene's chair fell over, so quickly did she spring from it, and the footman was able to impart delicious confidences to Buttons for a second time: "They're 'avin' a fair beano hupstairs, I can tell *you*," he concluded with grinning emphasis.

Lady Vyne, good soul, had been indulging in a quiet nap before dinner, and her astonishment was great when she reached the drawing-room, whilst his lordship soon returned to dinner from his club and heartily welcomed the wanderers, especially Rodney, whose long absence rendered his unexpected return all the more delightful.

Harington had been offered a short leave by Lord Roberts, and, of course, eagerly availed himself of the favour. But in a little while, he explained, all the British troops now quartered in France would be quietly sent home. Indeed he hoped to be permanently back in town within a month.

Why he and Irene should look at each other when he said this, and why everybody else should laugh when they both blushed at being caught, no one troubled to explain.

He asked Ethel to marry him.

But the incident set Rodney thinking, and the result of his cogitations became apparent a little later when, in a quiet corner of the drawing-room he asked Ethel to marry him in November.

'I can't possibly be ready," she protested.

"Not even if there's an opportunity for a double wedding?" he said.

"I am quite sure Irene won't be married until early next year," she whispered, "but—but—if she agrees for November I will agree too."

Now, as both girls had debated the question many times from every possible point of view, and had already determined that a double wedding in November was absolutely within the bounds of even the dressmaker's limited imagination, it will be seen that there was not much need for the many and convincingly ingenious arguments used by their suitors before the date was finally fixed.

But such are the ways of women, and they are pleasant ways withal.

So it came to pass that after a brilliant ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square, which was attended among many other representatives of rank and fashion, by the Duke of Sussex, and the Earl of Tramore—few will recognise Lord Wolseley and Lord Roberts by these titles—Major and

They drove back to Grosvenor Square.

Lady Irene Harington and Commander and Mrs. Rodney drove back to the well-remembered house in Grosvenor Square to attend a very lively, not to say uproarious, wedding-breakfast.

By a little kindly arrangement made by the authorities it was not until the meal was well advanced that letters were handed to the two ladies announcing that her Majesty had been pleased to bestow upon them the insignia of the order of the Royal Red Cross for their services with the field hospital in France, and at the same time the War Office and Admiralty announced to Harington and Rodney that they were respectively gazetted Colonel and Post Captain.

They set forth on their wedding tours almost at the same moment; Irene and her husband to pass a quiet honeymoon in Yorkshire, whilst Ethel and Frank started for Paris and Egypt, as Mrs. Rodney would not be content until she had seen with her own eyes the exact locality where her sailor lover had blown up the Suez Canal.

By a singular coincidence they joined the *Peninsular* at Brindisi, and it was from the deck of that fine steamer whilst passing through the canal that Rodney pointed out to his wife the spot where he had succeeded in inflicting upon the allied nations the most damaging blow struck at them during the opening period of the war.

* * * * *

In the bar parlour of the "Cat and Anchor" at Catford a goodly company of cyclists assemble nightly to discuss old stories and new tyres. The conversation ranges from reminiscences of the great fights in the Seine Valley to the latest record established by the club. But never a race along the Ripley Road can compare in interest with that spin taken by the Catford Cyclist Corps from Vernon to Beuil.

The perpetual president of the club is Major William Briggs, who retired from the Army with Her Majesty's

permission to retain his rank and uniform. He plays his magnificent part with unassuming dignity. The one story he never tells, but which is often told of him for the edification of admiring juniors, is the record of his adventure with the Zouaves, and how he preferred to look into the Valley of the Shadow rather than save his life by treachery.

A goodly company of cyclists assembled.

The gallant Major is vastly improved in manner and appearance. He bears upon him the stamp of a man who has deserved well of his country by responsible and noble deeds, and it is rumoured that his business as a cycle manufacturer has become extremely profitable since his return home.

* * * *

At Worthing, Colonel Perkins was unanimously chosen as Mayor for the succeeding year. Now that the alarms of war were over his good wife resolved that the new-born greatness of her husband would not permit of his personal attendance to the small details of a drapery establishment. It was obvious that the British Leonidas, the man who struck the first and most determined blow at the enemies of England, could not be expected to measure yards of calico or receive mysterious confidences as to the material for linings. So the shop, which throve amazingly, was handed over to an experienced manager, and Colonel and Mrs. Perkins with the children removed to a larger house in the fashionable West.

* * * * *

It was difficult to know how to recompense adequately the services which Mr. Thompson had rendered to the nation by the invention of his marvellous electric rifle.

There could not be the slightest doubt that by its aid alone Paris had been captured, and the capture of Paris meant the immediate cessation of the war, which must otherwise have dragged on its weary length for weeks, if not for months. What this meant, from the mere financial aspect, will be realised when it is remembered that the joint expenditure of Great Britain and the United States upon the maintenance of troops and ships in active service was estimated at £2,500,000 sterling daily.

When approached on the subject, Mr. Thompson himself emphatically repudiated any idea of receiving more than a modest reward for his work and he named an amount which whilst ridiculously small, would in his opinion suffice for the needs of himself and his family.

The matter however came before Parliament and a proposal was made that as it was understood to be her Majesty's intention to confer a baronetcy upon the famous inventor, the nation must give him the means of maintaining his new position with dignity and ease. It was consequently resolved that as the expense of manufacturing the apparatus and preparing the rifles had already been born departmentally, Sir Henry Thompson should receive a bonus of £2 for each weapon supplied to the troops engaged in the attack upon the French capital.

In other words he received £200,000, which was exactly twenty times as much as he had asked for.

* * * * *

Peyton and de Vismes, the heroes of the ride through the pass, both received promotion and the Victoria Cross. For his subsequent services in organising the successful attack upon the Central Asian Railway, Colonel W. J. Peyton was gazetted a K.C.S.I. The native comrades of the two British Officers were also rewarded by the Government of India with a generosity that evoked the liveliest approval in every cavalry bazaar from Peshawar to Tuticorin.

* * * *

When Colonel Ritchie and his charming wife arrived in New York, *en route* from London to San Francisco, they were met by two tug-boats full of interviewers, and were compelled to hold a series of brilliant receptions in the Waldorf Hotel to afford their numerous friends and innumerable admirers an opportunity of congratulating the famous leader of cavalry upon the many splendid achievements which his audacious originality had rendered possible to the troops of the United States.

The chief railway companies running to the west competed for the honour of supplying a special train to convey Colonel and Mrs. Ritchie and their friends to the Golden Gate, but in each case the invitation contained a polite hint that the journey would not be performed within sixty hours. Those fourteen ruined engines still loomed large in the memory of American railway men.

In San Francisco, of course, the party came in for a State ovation, and the last news to hand of the gallant Colonel is that he has been cordially commanded to fill an honoured place on board the *Hohenzollern* when that distinguished yacht next bears her Imperial master to Cowes.

* * * * *

And thus the curtain drops upon the chief actors of this drama of to-morrow, whilst the stage is cleared for the superb spectacle of a world free from bloodshed and rapine and famine.

CHAPTER LVI.

The Destiny of the Race.

So Peace ruled: not that sullen silence which harbours in its breast pois nous passions, but a peace such as the world had never known, deep, eternal and serene.

In this last mad eruption the evil genius of war had exhausted itself and humanity had cast it forth as a noisesome thing to be tolerated no more. The Saxon race for a moment held the world in fee. But it was only to give to the nations abiding rest, to sooth ambition, to repair injustice, to mete out to all freedom before the law of justice.

Such a vision of a new world and of a new age had Tennyson. Was this the consummation of the poet's dream? Had mankind progressed—

> Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle flags were furl'd
> In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World?

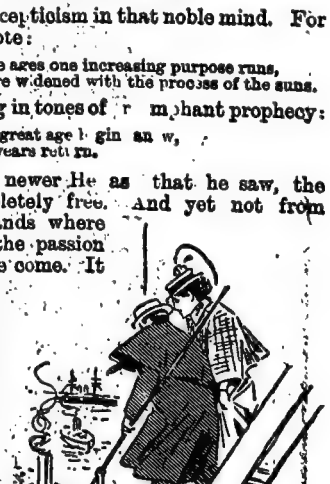
There was no room for scepticism in that noble mind. For in the same breath he wrote:

> Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

Did not Shelley also sing in tones of triumphant prophecy:

> The world's great age begin anew,
> The golden years return.

This surely was the "newer Hellas" that he saw, the Hellas of a world completely free. And yet not from countries of romance, lands where warm blood keeps fresh the passion of poetry, did the miracle come. It was from the race dedicated to commerce; the sturdy, unimaginative, practical people whose home, first set in the little Island of Great Britain, spread forth to a new continent in the West, and then broadened out till it covered the earth and sea.



Colonel Ritchie and his wife arrive at New York.

Such is the destiny of race. Three empires has the world known. Transient tyrannies have swept across it, and in the dark background of time there loom gigantic shadows of strange dynasties covering the earth with their power. Of them history has no word to

say. But since man's life became clear and intelligible there have been but three preponderating races, each representing a cosmic force and taking its place in the due development of the destiny of humanity.

First came the Greek, the strong, sensuous being who gave order to chaos, who wrested from its bondage the perfect life of man. His was the rule of Art, that great force which gives each thing its place and finds for each a use, which cuts off the civilised from the barbarous, which carves the rich doorway to the Temple of the Ideal. Greece gave to mankind its implements—its faith, its yearnings, its strength; and in doing so exhausted herself.

There was the Roman, the man of action, not the dreamer of Hellas, not wrapped in the sensuous charms of art, but the strenuous builder of empire. It was the destiny of Rome to found the great doctrines of jurisdiction, to give law to the nations. Hers was a civil, not an æsthetic strength. As her great poet has in noble verses propounded;

> Others, I know it well,
> The breathing bronze will chase,
> And from the death-white marble
> Upcall the living face,
> Will plead with eloquence not thine,
> Will mete and map the skies,
> And with the voice of science tell
> When stars will set and rise.
> 'Tis thine, O Rome, to rule:
> This mission ne'er foresco,—
> To spare in war the vanquished
> And bring the haughty low.

She ruled by virtue of impartial Law, by the just principle which brought all peoples willingly to her feet. And yet even Law was not enough to bring a lasting empire. Others arose who also knew her Law, and from her nerveless grasp snatched the sceptre of her dominion. And in a day the Empire of Rome melted away before the vigorous Northmen.

Now has taken up the tale the third overwhelming dynasty that the world has known. The new empire is that of the Saxon race. Art and Law had had their day; there followed the dominance of science.

The nations had learnt the lessons of beauty, and knew how to disfigure them; had caught the message of Law, and knew how to abuse it. But nature has her revenges, and as the earth opened out before the pioneer, and discovery narrowed the great continent of Europe, and brought its peoples into active rivalry, it became clear that the new empire was not one of orb and sceptre—not the annexation of countries, and the absorption of alien races. It was to be an empire of another, a subtler, a more enduring, a more resistless kind.

For the message which science gave the world was that that race alone would conquer in the struggle for existence which showed greatest adaptability, which could easiest accommodate itself to the countless variations of earth's wayward moods. It was the cruel law of the survival of the fittest. There was need of some versatile people who feared no change of climate or contradiction of condition, for whom heat and cold, desert and fertile land, sea and plain, peace and war, luxury and indigence, struggle and ease were alike—whose temperament had infinite degrees passing from sanguine heat to phlegmatic torpor. For such a race the earth lay open, offering its dominion.

Here lay the tragedy of less fortunate peoples—more blessed, perhaps, in rich qualities of heart—more developed, it might be, in gentle graces and warm emotions,—but forced, after all, to pay the penalty of their very virtues.

Life is eternal action and re-action, and from the being who rejoices in a nervous temperament which leads him to the pleasant paths of art, she sucks the virile vigour which should nourish and sustain. It is the fate of the Celt. He exhausts himself in the passion of life and scatters his years from him in each gust of self-abandonment. He is the invalid amongst men, the sick person, incapable of

A Solace and a Stay.

Ladies shopping or visiting; business men whose affairs compel the postponement of meals; all, in fact, whose avocations or recreations necessitate a protracted fast, or an undue amount of mental or physical fatigue, find a solace and a stay in a cup of Bovril, which can be prepared in a moment, and can be had almost anywhere. Taken at night before retiring, Bovril proves a "night-cap" par excellence, soothing the jaded brain and nerves and promoting refreshing sleep.

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A brilliant ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square.

continued effort, needing all that luxury can give and yielding himself to dreams and visions and things impalpable.

Nor is the more vigorous people of romance, that northern people, fitted for the struggle. For romance plays too great a part in its life. Its character is weakened by sensuousness, and its vision dulled by speculation. It may be led to victory, it cannot take itself to the goal. For in this new empire it needs that each and every man shall himself be leader. It must be a nation of pioneers.

This, then, is the mission of the Saxon race—slowly but surely to pour itself over the earth, to absorb the nations, to bring to pass that wonderful dream of a world united in a single family and speaking a common speech.

How rich the blood, how noble the inheritance of Britain! She has the stern indomitable defiance of the Saxon, the strenuousness of the Celt, the romantic genius of the Teuton. She is both actor and dreamer. Her poets have dwelt beside the founders of her empire. Reckless of danger, amorous of what is new, versatile in action, ready in resource, fertile beyond the ingenuity of chance, adaptable to all changes of climate and modes of life, at home in ice-bound regions and beneath the equatorial sun, carrying with her the capacity of empire, the power to rule, and obstinate in the attainment of her desire, she is bound by no limit of race, no dimension of geography.

And thus she early found her power. She has led the world in all its noblest struggles. Whilst other nations groaned in kingly servitude, she was already free. Her battle of liberty was fought before the hope of freedom dawned in Europe. Her conscience refused that allegiance to sacerdotalism, which drenched the Continent with blood, and her reformation long premeditated, came, if not without the agony of struggle, still gently and without excess. Her Parliament at almost the dawn of her history gave equal laws, disputed with kings, and drove out tyrants. Her press was free, her speech unrestrained. And as she batled ever for freedom, so she gave herself to the passionate pursuit of knowledge, to the mysteries of philosophy, to the sublime teaching of science. Thus, armed with all that discovery could yield her and owing allegiance only to herself, she poured her sons over the earth and upon the seas, and in remote regions founded another empire. America arose — that second England — new home of the Saxon race, and heir to her aspirations and her destiny—America which developed a new type of being, more versatile still, and still more strenuous.

Commerce bent itself to Britain and all peoples entrusted to her their possessions. The Saxon tongue has become the speech of the world, the Saxon ensign—whether British or American—is the flag of the seas.

Thus, as life becomes more complex and harder grows the struggle, there is no escape for peoples not fitted to bear its strain, and the Saxon race will absorb all and embrace all, reanimating old civilisations and giving new vigour to exhausted nations. England and America—their destiny is to order and rule the world, to give it peace and freedom, to bestow upon it prosperity and happiness, to fulfil the responsibilities of an all-devouring people.

This vision—far-off may-be—already dawns: and in the glory of its celestial light is the peace of nations.

The End.

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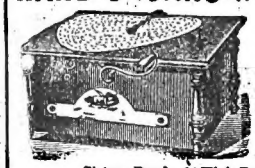

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

S. T.—Yes; the Thames and the Severn are connected by a canal thirty-seven miles long, but its existence is known to very few people for the reason that as railways extended, the canal was allowed to fall into disuse and become unnavigable. It leaves the Thames at Lechlade, and at one part it has a tunnel three miles long under a hill. It has recently been rendered fit for navigation at a cost of £20,000.

C. G.—The Chinese, properly trained and fed, make formidable opponents in athletics and war. Some of the Chinese at our new possession, Wei-hai-wei, have been practising football under British guidance, and they have succeeded so well that a team is to visit this country for next season. What can be done with the Chinese as soldiers may be seen from Gordon's exploits in the Flowery Land.

J. M.—You will need to be very healthy and have a strong constitution, for life in the Niger Coast Protectorate. According to the report for last year, the European population was 200, each of whom was treated by the doctors, on the average, six times in the twelve months. Fifteen died and fifty-eight were invalided. High wages are enticing, but they are not everything.

Martel.—It has recently been discovered by a British scientist that fresh water falling through air electrifies it negatively, while salt water under similar conditions electrifies it positively.

S. T. R.—The South American Republics are all afraid that the United States will swallow them up; they accuse the U.S. of bad faith in connection with Mexico, and say that the Great Republic will hesitate at nothing to find a pretext for annexing their territory. Your idea that these countries would be strong enough to prevent annexation if they combined is doubtful; but they would not combine. They do not like each other, and there is a preponderance of Indian and mixed races among their populations that bodes ill for combination. In Ecuador, for instance, there are 100,000 whites out of a population of 1,270,000. The army numbers 3,300, and the navy consists of a torpedo-launch and a transport.

C.—Cremation does not seem to prosper in Scotland. Since the crematorium was opened in Glasgow four years ago, only forty bodies have been burned. This may be due to the charges, but there is always great difficulty in getting people to depart from established custom.

D. R.—The greatest depth to which a diver has descended into the sea is 204ft. At that depth the pressure is 83lb. to the square inch.

T. R. E.—The monkey temple of Benares is one of the grandest and most costly buildings in the city. The followers of Brahma hold this animal in great awe; it is sacred, and they fear and worship it as devoutly as any of the images of wood and stone. The temple is elaborately fitted up for the accommodation of numerous monkeys who are confined in it.

B.—The power of gelatine when contracting is shown by what happens in collotype plates. If one of these be over-dried, the gelatine in contracting tears away the surface of the glass. The glass being "ground" gives the gelatine a hold. The glass tears in fern-like patterns generally, but different kinds of gelatine produce different patterns.

V. I.—There is a real "Strad." violin in the Hungarian National Museum that was presented to that institution on one condition—that it should always be lent, for special purposes, to the best native player. It was made for Leopold II., Duke of Tuscany.

G. L.—There are many species of flies that never indulge in sleep.

H. O.—Hospitals are numerous in all the Australian Colonies, especially in New South Wales. Although the Colony has long since been settled its resources are still largely undeveloped and numbers of men are at work in districts far removed from home; hospitals are therefore a necessity, and are to be found in all large provincial towns. There are one hundred and eight in New South Wales, all of which, except three, are subsidised by the Government.

F. D., having read that the King of Sweden is the descendant of Bernadotte, one of Napoleon's soldiers, asks if that Royal house can claim to have a humbler origin than any other in Europe?——————No, the King of Servia holds the record in this respect. He is the great-grandson of Yephrem, the brother of the heroic Milosh Obrenovitch, the leader in the struggle for Servian independence. Milosh was a herdsman and Yephrem was a keeper of pigs.

K. G.—The oldest commercial company now in existence is the New River Company, founded under a charter in 1619; its shares now fetch enormous prices. The oldest company concerned with commerce in its strict sense is the Hudson Bay Company, founded under a charter granted in 1670 by Charles II. to Prince Rupert and others. The original scope of the company was much modified in 1868, when it surrendered most of its right to the Crown for a money indemnity.

Y. wishes to know why the House of Lords is sometimes called the "House of Landlords."——————Because almost all of them are large landowners. Fully one-third of the land in Great Britain is in the possession of members of the gilded chamber.

J. H.—Nearly a million quail are sent from Egypt to France every year.

L. A.—The laughing plant grows in Arabia. It has bright flowers and soft, velvety seed pods. Each pod contains two or three seeds, resembling black beans, which the natives dry and crush. On taking a dose of this powder the soberest person begins to dance, laugh, and shout, and continues till he is exhausted; he then falls asleep, and on waking up, he has no recollection of what has taken place since he took the powder.

C. N.—British Guiana is the colony that contains the greater number of nationalities. Among the labourers may be seen—in addition to the aboriginal Indians—negroes from Africa, creoles from the West Indian Islands, Arabs from Algeria, Spaniards, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Afghans, Chinese, Danish, and natives of all parts of India, with occasionally a gang of British seamen. The planters for the most part are British, but there are representatives of many European countries also.

D. E.—Among the Romans and Athenians it was a very serious offence to get into debt. So strict was their law in this respect that a debtor was often sold into slavery in order to raise money to pay his creditors.

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"We can honestly recommend the firm."—*Athletic Record*, September 3rd, 1898.

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Consolation (25 prizes) £23 Cycle for £14

TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—COMPETITION IS NOW OPEN, and **closes March 3rd, 1899.** Results will be declared as soon as possible, although it may be a fortnight afterwards before all replies are posted.

Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Enclose loose stamp for postage of Result of Competition. As so few are able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount** paid for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or for one of our Consolation Prizes **if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. One solution only allowed to each competitor. Disregard of this regulation renders any Prize liable to forfeiture.

£100 We offer this Reward to any lady or gentleman able to prove that we have ever in the whole course of our existence sold our cheapest machines under £15 cash either to any ordinary customer, agent, dealer or shipper. We are continually refusing £14 and £14 10s., both by cheque, through post, and cash in our showrooms, for the self-same cycles. We absolutely could not afford to sell to anyone below £15.

Mark letters "SHORT STORIES" on top corner of envelope, and address to the Managing Director,

A.B. CYCLE CO. LTD., 59 & 60 CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, W.C.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Hopetoun Street, London, W.C.

THE 'DOLLY' SPECIALITIES

"DOLLY" BLUE.

CAUTION.

Notice.—"DOLLY" Blue is neatly tied in a white bag to a small handle to hold by whilst using. Sold only in Plain White Calico Bags. No blue (whether in bags or not), except that of Messrs. Wm. Edge & Sons Ltd., can be Sold as "Dolly" Blue. "Dolly" Blue is sold by all Grocers and Oilmen at 1d. per bag.

"DOLLY" CREAM AND TINTS.

"DOLLY" Cream Colour, for tinting Curtains, Muslins, Laces, Silks, Blouses, etc., a rich Cream Shade.

"DOLLY" Tints manufactured in six Shades—Pink, Terra-Cotta, Old Gold, Heliotrope, Sea Green, and Canary Yellow—for tinting Faded Ribbons, Lace, etc. Sold everywhere, 1d. per bag. Will wash out when required.

"DOLLY" FAST DYES.

The "DOLLY" Dyes are fast on Wool and Cotton alike, and will not wash out or fade. "Dolly" Dyes are not Tints, but are Solid Colours, viz., Black, Brown, Blue, Green, Red, and Maroon, Price 3d. each Dye. "Dolly" Dyes for Home Dyeing are sold by all Grocers and Oilmen.

IMPORTANT.

The Public are cautioned against attempts which may be made to supply other Blue, Tints and Dyes than those of Messrs. Wm. Edge and Sons Ltd., when "Dolly" Blue, "Dolly" Tints, and "Dolly" Dyes are ordered.

The "DOLLY" SPECIALITIES are Manufactured only by WM. EDGE & SONS Ltd., Bolton, Lancs.

NUTRITIOUS, EASILY DIGESTED, OF DELICIOUS FLAVOUR & AROMA.

PURE SOLUBLE

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GUARANTEED TO BE THE PRODUCT OF THE FINEST COCOA BEANS.

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GOLDEN SYRUP.

LONGEST ESTABLISHED PUREST & BEST.

"MATCHLESS"

"WARNING TO LADIES."

Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.

"SIMPLE TEST."

Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with verdigris.

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is therefore free from acid.

FREE FROM ACID POISON OR GRIT

LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD

METAL POLISH.

PATON, CALVERT & Co MANUFACTURERS, LIVERPOOL.

RED WHITE AND BLUE

SOLD EVERYWHERE

FRENCH COFFEE

DELICIOUS FOR BREAKFAST OR AFTER DINNER

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